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SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS
BY MODERN AUTHORS

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SHORT
HISTORICAL PLAYS
BY MODERN AUTHORS

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HEREFORD

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INTRODUCTION

THERE are already in existence several volumes of short plays on historical themes written by History teachers as companions to particular text-books. The appeal of the present volume, it is hoped, should be wider. This collection contains no play which is not worth reading in the English lesson for its merits as literature, no play which would not be helpful in the History lesson by bringing the past to life, and no play which would not be interesting to present on the stage. The English master finds that many modern plays are on trivial themes and the History master finds that many historical plays are undramatic—mere History in dialogue. It is hoped that the plays here collected will be welcomed as a solution of both these difficulties. They should also be useful to Play Reading Groups and Historical Societies.

Correlation of subjects is still neglected in many schools, and the class which learns a little History in the English lesson is as fortunate as the History class which occasionally sets aside its History books to read a good play. The value of drama in the school, whether for English or History teaching, is now so widely recognised as to need no emphasis here.

Few History masters, we may hope, still teach their subject as a mere series of facts. The History lesson is nowadays a more vivid reconstruction of the past than in the days when names and dates obscured the real life of History. But the historian is in a difficulty still. He may recognise that a man is not merely the sum of his actions ; he may have glimpses of the wild

INTRODUCTION

hopes and fears, for instance, of Columbus and his men ; but he may lack the power to recreate vividly the living personality of a historical character. Similarly, he may be able to present accurately the facts of a mighty experience like the discovery of America, but his pupils may never share the deep emotions which it must have aroused. The successful dramatist makes the past live by seeing in his creative imagination the real men who are names in the History books. Further, the conflicts of characters and ideals which the historian finds interesting, the playwright makes dramatic and compelling.

Although the plays in this volume may seem to present in general an ugly picture of human history,—of cruelty, treachery, and injustice,—events of the present day do not suggest a civilisation yet entirely free from these qualities. On the other hand, tragedy often brings out the noblest in men ; the ruthless inhumanity of a Campbell of Kilmohr is more than balanced by the fortitude and loyalty of a Dugald Stewart ; Sir Thomas More and Jane Grey stand in their finest aspects against their tragic background. We may even find laughter here, though for a really cheerful outlook on life we must not look to historical drama ; for gaiety does not leave on History so lasting a mark as sorrow.

In his presentation of History, the dramatist is frequently compelled to take liberties with his material. He often “ telescopes ” events and sometimes combines imagination and knowledge to suit his dramatic purpose. Such departures from historical accuracy are pointed out in the notes, where in addition the historical value of each play is assessed. The editor's thanks are due to Miss I. H. Bewick and Miss K. L. Day for valuable suggestions, and to his wife for a great deal of help in all stages of the preparation of the book.

E. R. W.

THE DISCOVERY

By HERMON OULD

CHARACTERS

Christopher Columbus.

Pedro Gutierrez, an officer.

Pepe, a page-boy.

Juan Patiño

Diego Garcia

Francisco

Guillermo Ires

} other seamen.

APPROXIMATE PRONUNCIATIONS

Pedro Gutierrez—Páy-dro Goo-tee-érreth.

Pepe—Páy-pay.

Juan Patiño—Hoo-áhn Pah-tée-nyo.

Diego Garcia—Dee-áy-go Gar-thée-ah.

Francisco—Frah-thís-co.

Guillermo Ires—Gill-yáir-mo Ee-rays.

None of the Spanish vowels is exactly the same as the English. The *e* is something between *ay* in *pay* and *e* in *egg*. The *r* is always rolled. *Th* as in *think*. *G* as in *good*.

Columbus's Spanish name is *Christobal Colon*, but as no one calls him by name in the play, this is not needed.

THE DISCOVERY

[We read in our History books that Columbus sailed from Palos on August 3, 1492, and first sighted land on October 12, 1492. The dramatist has made of that bald fact a vital experience which we can share, and he has helped us to see Columbus and his men as real people with fears and hopes which we can understand.

The events of the mutiny here related are not claimed to be historically correct. Columbus was on more than one occasion faced with the sort of rising which appears in the play, however, and he must have calmed the anger and fears of his men by such means. His crew had been recruited from among unwilling men—some of them convicts—and he was obliged to encourage them by such means as misrepresenting the distance travelled each day away from their homes in Spain. In his Journal the entry for October 10th reads :—

“Day and night made fifty-nine leagues progress to the West-south-west ; reckoned to the crew forty-four. Here the men could suffer it no longer. They complained of the long voyage ; but the Admiral encouraged them as best he could, repeating the benefits they would acquire. And he added that it was to no purpose to complain since he had come to the Indies, and that so he must continue on till he found them with the help of our Lord.”

It was at 2 A.M. on the morning of the 12th that a light was seen ahead. It was a natives' fire on an island of the Bahama group. Columbus had made a greater discovery than he ever knew.]

SCENE.—On board the “*Santa Maria*.”

TIME.—October 11, 1492.

The ship is seen from an angle, which brings the poop somewhat to the left, the quarter-deck taking up the greater

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part of the stage. If it is visible, the midmast should bear a crucifix, in passing which everybody mechanically crosses himself. A large lantern, containing a lighted candle, is fixed at the extreme top of the poop. The night is still, and there is little movement in the sails.

Two seamen are visible, both well to the right. Juan is on his knees, adjusting rigging ; Diego is helping. The actions of both of them are indeterminate, clearly designed to conceal their real purpose. They speak in loud whispers.

Diego. Within the next half an hour he will go to the poop-head as sure as God's alive. He can't keep away from it. His eyes are glued on the sky as if he expected his precious New World to burst out of it like a thunderbolt !
[*He laughs derisively*

Juan. Poor wretch !

Diego. Now, then, Juan—quaking again !

Juan. That's a lie ! Why should I quake ? What is there to fear ? (*After a brief pause*) But I am sorry for him.

Diego. Why waste your pity ? Shall it be one madman, his head stocked with visions, or forty honest seamen pining for their homes ?

Juan. *Santisima Maria*, but he's a *gracious* madman . . .

Diego (impatiently). Gracious when all goes to his pleasure, but as irritable as a teething child when crossed !

[*The song of seamen is heard ; it is a scarcely distinguishable murmur.*

“ Here's a keg o' rum
To Kingdom Come
The Devil laughs,
But God is dumb ! ”

Juan (sharply). They ought to stop that. The captain is always furious when he hears it.

THE DISCOVERY

Diego. Shan't we even *sing* to keep up our spirits ?
'Sh !

[*They attend with assumed assiduity to the rigging.*
Pedro Gutierrez comes in ; he is somewhat surprised when he sees the others.

Pedro. Who's that ?

Diego (rising). Diego Garcia and Juan Patiño, sir.

Pedro (inclined to be communicative). It's dark. I would welcome the moon. . . .

Diego. Aye, aye, Don Pedro. Some of us would welcome the coast of Spain still more.

Pedro (pumping). Impatient, Diego ?

Diego (surlily). There are limits to patience, sir.

Pedro (humouring him). And you've reached them, eh ?

Diego. We're like bats trying to fly by day. It's time he gave way. Why should one man have the lives of fifty in his hands ?

Pedro (with authority). I hope we are not entertaining mutinous thoughts, Diego.

Diego. Mutiny is an ugly word, sir.

Pedro. And an uglier deed.

[*Juan, finishing his job at the rigging, rises, and with a salute goes off. Columbus comes on. He is a tall, well-built man of forty-six. Hair prematurely white, complexion fair, almost ruddy. A man of quick temper and irritability which he controls only with an effort. His face, in repose, is melancholy. Seeing Don Pedro in conversation with Diego, he looks a trifle suspicious. He turns quickly to Diego.*

Columbus. That candle on the foremast is guttering ; see that it is put right.

Diego (sullenly). Aye, aye, sir.

[*He goes.*

Columbus (recalling him). And, Diego !

Diego (coming back). Yes, sir.

Columbus. This is the quarter-deck.

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Diego. Yes, sir.

Columbus. A good sailor knows his place.

Diego (with repressed fury). Yes, sir.

[*Columbus points off; Diego, scarcely concealing a scowl, goes off.*

Columbus (to Pedro). A surly dog !

Pedro. And a dangerous one. He does more than his share to inspire discontent.

Columbus. I have remarked it.

[*Columbus is thoughtful for a moment and remains stationary. Presently he goes on to the poop and looks out to sea. Pedro follows him. Simultaneously, Pepe, the page-boy, emerges from the hatchway, against which he stands, out of sight of the others. When they begin to talk he listens eagerly.*

Columbus. Easterly, ever easterly. God is in the wind, Don Pedro.

Pedro (with a short laugh). The crew would say that it is the Devil, rather, captain. All day, and every day, the wind blows easterly, blowing them away from their homes and their country, their wives and children, their friends and sweethearts.

Columbus (hastily). You too, Don Pedro? Do you, too, doubt?

Pedro. Have I said so, captain? Am I not here by your side, prepared?

Columbus. Forgive me, friend. You are one of the few with faith, and it is not easy to hold fast to faith when nothing seems to warrant faith. Listen to that.

Seamen (off, singing) :—

“ Here’s a keg o’ rum
To Kingdom Come !
The Devil laughs,
But God is dumb ! ”

[*Columbus and Pedro descend to the quarter-deck.*

THE DISCOVERY

Columbus. *Madre de Dios*, they drink too much.

Pedro. They are simple men and must have their relaxation. (*The next words break from him almost involuntarily.*) We have not all your vision, captain.

Columbus. You are beginning to doubt, Don Pedro. Give me the contents of your mind. I am an impatient man and prone to be unjust; but (*whimsically*) I mean well, Don Pedro. I mean well. Speak without fear.

Pedro (*at first with diffidence, but rapidly gaining confidence*). To-day is the 11th of October—more than two months since we saw the shores of Spain receding. You held a glittering hope of discovery before us, and we had faith. Day followed day, and soon we found ourselves in uncharted seas, but still we had faith. . . . I, at least, had faith. (*With dignity*) I am a man of some little learning, not easily led to wonder at natural phenomena as the unlettered might be. But I confess that I knew some uneasiness when the needle of the compass, instead of pointing to the constant North, jumped as if the devil had laid hand on it, and pointed to the North-west.¹ I am not a child, nor a simpleton, nor a superstitious seaman; but there is such a thing as being too clever, prying into mysteries which were not meant for our eyes. In all humility, captain, I ask if it is God's will that we should pursue this voyage in the face of every portent of ill-luck?

Columbus (*impatiently*). It is *my* will. Is that not enough?

¹ This refers to Columbus' discovery of magnetic variation. The compass needle normally points, not to the geographical pole, but to the magnetic pole, and the deviation between these two points varies in different parts of the earth's surface. There are points where there is no deviation at all; where, in fact, the needle points to the geographical pole, and it was this phenomenon which so scared the sailors. On September 17th the Journal records: "The pilots took the North and found that the needles varied to the North a good quarter; the sailors were terrified and dismayed and did not say why."

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Pedro (bowing his head). I am answered.

Columbus (hastily). Forgive me, Don Pedro. A curb for my tongue—oh, a curb for my unbridled tongue, my worst enemy! (*More quietly.*) My will, friend, because God's will. Shall that suffice?

Pedro (not appeased). I do not claim your confidence, sir.

Columbus (thundering again). But I claim yours. (*The sound of the seamen's song is again heard.*) A blight upon their singing! Bid them stop. (*Pedro goes off, with an air of discontent. When he is alone, Columbus looks out at sea. Muttering.*) Mystery? Would God implant the desire to solve mysteries and not provide the solution? (*Suddenly Pepe runs up the steps to the poop. Columbus is startled.*) *Pañeta!* Who is that?

Pepe. Me, captain—Pepe!

Columbus (frowning on him). Have you been there all the time?

Pepe. Please, sir, I am off duty.

Columbus. Then why aren't you down below?

Pepe (whimsically, knowing that he is privileged). I prefer your company to theirs. (*He points below.*) Am I in the way here, sir?

Columbus (humouring him). What a boy! And what do *they* say of the preference?

Pepe. I don't speak to them. I hate them.

Columbus. 'Sh, Pepe! And get you gone! (*Pepe turns reluctantly.*) Quick! (*The boy goes more quickly.*) Here! You heard what Don Pedro said?

Pepe. Yes, captain. And *he* is the best . . .

Columbus. But even he doubts . . .

Pepe. Everybody doubts . . . except me.

Columbus (bitterly). Everybody . . .

Pepe (eagerly). Except me, captain, except me.

[*He goes to him impetuously.*]

Columbus (laying a hand on the boy's head). You are young enough to have faith. Thank you, boy.

THE DISCOVERY

[*The seamen's song is heard again.*]

Pepe. They are horrible when they drink too much. They say it makes them forget.

Columbus. Poor fellows !

Pepe (*approaching nearer*). Captain, be careful ! Sometimes they are desperate.

[*The song surges up like a growl.*]

Columbus. That is ugly. I bade Don Pedro stop them. So you think they might become dangerous ? (*Don Pedro returns*). Go, boy. (*Pepe moves away, but does not go out.*) Well, Don Pedro ? Their singing changes to a roar. The deepening of their discontent is ominous.

[*The noise grows louder.*]

Pedro. Captain, they ignore my order.

Columbus (*furious*). I'll make an example of one of them. (*Suddenly.*) Hallo, there ! What sneaking mischief-maker is that crawling about the deck ? Show yourself ! [*Francisco appears from the right.*]

Columbus. Ho, Francisco—you, is it ?

Francisco. Yes, sir. And I'm no sneaking mischief-maker.

Columbus. Then why behave as one ? Why are you here ? Did I send for you ? Is discipline obsolete in the Ocean Sea ? Is Jack as good as his master nowadays ?

Francisco (*humbly*). Your words sting, sir !

Columbus. And are meant to. I am tired of the mumbling and grumbling of the crew. I have been patient too long.

Francisco. I came to warn you, sir. The temper of the crew is dangerous.

Columbus. Danger is the breath of my life. I should doubt I lived if I lived outside danger.

Francisco (*the words springing from him spasmodically*). Our power of endurance has gone. We refuse to go on. I warn you. I respect your person and do not wish to see violence used ; but it is more than

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mortal can bear, this endless sailing into unknown seas.

Columbus (to Pedro). Don Pedro, the ship is in your hands. I will talk to our friend as man to man. (*Pedro goes on to the poop. Columbus, his voice gentler, almost ingratiating, turns to Francisco, who shifts from foot to foot, nervous by reason of the unaccustomed propinquity.*) Francisco, let me plead with you. There are men whom God has chosen for the working of His will. I am such a man. There is no more merit in me than in this ship : we are both instruments of God. Sometimes He chooses oddly : a stronger than I might have served His purpose better. But since God chose me, who shall withstand me ? The four corners of the earth are to be linked up in the knowledge of their Saviour. I have lifted the veils which obscured the prophecies of Holy Writ, and I have learned that it was ordained that I, chosen among all men, should discover that great world beyond the ocean which I know exists as surely as I know that Heaven exists.

Francisco. Must simple men suffer because of *your* knowledge ?

Columbus (quickly). Simple men shall do their duty.

Francisco. There are limits to duty. Men will give up many things for duty and for gain, but you ask too much. Country, family, friends, perhaps even life itself—all these things you ask us to give up for *your* glory. *We* are not chosen of God to open up new ways : we are simple, humble men, sick for our homes and hungry for our wives.

Columbus. My Heaven, Francisco, you try me . . .

Francisco (gaining courage). Not more than you try us, sir. I come to you as a friend, sir. The men are at the end of their patience and spoiling for a fight. The stoutest rope breaks at last. (*The song swells up again. Spoken words mingle with the song, and the voice of Guillermo Ires is heard above the rest.*) Did you hear that, sir !

THE DISCOVERY

Columbus. I heard the snarling of angry beasts.

Francisco. You heard the just complaints of angry men, sir. (*Again Guillermo's voice pierces the din. Columbus stands rigid, endeavouring to catch the words.*) Did you hear *that*, sir?

Pepe (*who has been unobserved*). They shan't! They shan't!

Columbus. Boy, come here. What were the words?

Pepe (*almost weeping*). He said: "The *Santa Maria* will be the lighter for his carcass."

Columbus (*bitterly*). He said that, did he?

[*He blinks—is moved more than he will show.*]

Francisco. I am sorry, sir. . . . I knew how high feeling had run.

Columbus (*authoritatively*). Send Guillermo Ires to me!

Francisco (*not without diffidence*). Sorry, sir, but . . .

Columbus. Discipline knows no buts.

Francisco (*angrily*). Discipline is a thing of the past, sir. It's you or us.

Columbus (*to Don Pedro*). Don Pedro, let Guillermo Ires be sent to me. He shall know what it is like in irons.

[*Pedro is half-way down the stairs to the quarter-deck when Guillermo Ires and other seamen rush in an angry mass towards Columbus, growling like infuriated animals.*]

Columbus (*in a thunderous voice*). Stop! What is the meaning of this wild uproar? (*The men stand transfixed.*) The first man to move shall spend the rest of the night in irons!

[*There is a perceptible pause, during which nobody moves. Then, with a wild cry, Guillermo Ires breaks away from the others and advances towards Columbus.*]

Guillermo. And who's to put him in irons? We are thirty to one.

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Columbus (calmly). If nobody else is available for the office, I will perform it myself. Get below ! Let me hear no more of this.

Guillermo (in high excitement). We've stood too much. We've been duped day in, day out. We're men with the common feelings of men. We want our homes and our women. I say the *Santa Maria* shall turn her helm towards Spain at once, or we are not men but sheep.

Columbus (still calm). And who shall navigate her?

Guillermo. There's plenty here who can do that. The Devil's with *you*, we all know that, riding the easterly wind ; but we are not men unused to the sea. Once clear of this Devil's track to nowhere, we'll blow our way back to home.

[*Signs of assent from the rest of the crew. Columbus raises his hand, appealing for silence. He is paler than his wont, but very calm.*]

Columbus. Don Guillermo, you are an excellent sailor, a man of abundant resourcefulness. Some day, if your tongue does not run away with your discretion, you will achieve prosperity in your calling. To-day you are an able-bodied seaman and no more : I am your captain. Your duty is to obey me as mine is to obey the Royal Sovereigns of Spain who sent me. Let that be clearly understood between us and we shall not fall out. Now return to your duties.

[*Again a perceptible pause. Columbus's authoritative manner holds them. Presently Diego breaks out.*]

Diego. Words for children ! Froth and scum ! We are men : reason with us !

Columbus. Silence !

[*The tone of authority calms the men, who remain, however, in a huddled crowd, murmuring discontentedly. Columbus turns and goes up the stairs to the poop, where he stands and looks down upon the men.*]

THE DISCOVERY

Diego (snarling). I suppose you think you're on holy ground now? [*He bounds towards the stairs.*]

Voices (tumultuously). Have him down! Pitch him overboard! Put him in irons! Devil's tool! Italian renegade!

[*They are about to stampede up the poop gangway, when Pepe runs to the foot of the stairs and stands with his arms spread out.*]

Pepe. Cowards! Cowards! You will have to kill me first!

Voices. Out of the way! Devil's whelp! Lick-spittle!

Columbus. What! Does that child stand between me and death? (*Silence follows the commencement of his speech.*) Pepe! Come here!

Pepe (going to him quickly). My captain!

[*The men are somewhat sheepish.*]

Columbus. Pepe! This is a voyage of discovery. (*The men growl.*) I set out to discover a new world, a radiant land beyond unknown seas; to find new wealth and dominion for our Sovereign King and Queen, new souls for the sacrifice of our Saviour to redeem. So far I have discovered but one thing. (*He pauses and continues with slow deliberation.*) I have discovered that when a man is given a vision he must follow it alone. Loyalty passes like seaweed on an outgoing tide. Friendship breaks as a mast hollowed by worms breaks. Discipline, duty, and honourable obedience are bubbles that burst at the first contact. There remains but oneself. That is my only discovery so far, Pepe.

Pepe (his eyes gleaming with excitement). Captain, I am loyal, I am still obedient, still your devoted servant. . . .

Columbus (with some emotion). I am not ungrateful.

Pedro (scraping his throat, with dignity). I hope my loyalty has never been in question, sir? [*He salutes.*]

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Columbus (returning the salute). You have sometimes been silent, Don Pedro, when speech would have made your loyalty clear. But I thank you. . . .

[Columbus turns and looks out at sea ; for a moment his attention is fixed. He peers more earnestly into the darkness. There is a movement among the men. He turns.]

Juan. We are simple men, sir. . . .

Columbus (hastily). Shall simple men judge their betters ?

Guillermo (surlily). We may as well wait till to-morrow, at any rate.

Columbus. Dark deeds are better done in the dark.

[Guillermo, scowling, but sheepish, slinks off, followed by one or two of the seamen.]

Francisco. Desperate men do not always act up to the best that is in them, sir.

Columbus (with quiet irony). I thank you for reminding me, Francisco. Your best cannot be bettered. Good-night !

[Francisco half-turns to speak again, but thinks better of it and goes, shamefaced. Several others go, too, sheepish. A brief silence. Columbus does not move ; he is struggling with overwrought emotion. When he speaks his voice is not steady.]

Columbus. Go, boy !

[Pepe seizes his hand, kisses it, and hastily descends to the quarter-deck and goes out.]

Columbus (turning to Pedro). Two minutes ago, Don Pedro, I saw . . . I thought I saw . . . *(He peers into the darkness.)* It was . . . It is . . .

Pedro (in excitement). What, sir ?

Columbus. A light, faintly flickering, rising up and down. Look ! *[He points.]*

Pedro. It is, sir ! Glory be to God !

[At this moment there is a wild shout, off.]

Voice (off). A light ! A light ! Land ! Land !

THE DISCOVERY

[A sailor comes running on, delirious with joy and excitement.

Sailor. Did you see it, sir? A light! Blessed Mother of God! A light!

Columbus (with quiet authority). Give the order to heave to.

CURTAIN

FOR FURTHER READING

John Hampden, "The King Decides," in *Fifteen Modern Plays* (Nelson).

Markham, *The Sea Fathers*.

Duff, *The Truth about Columbus*.

QUESTIONS

1. Who was the first European to visit America?
2. What effect did the capture of Constantinople by the Turks (1453) have on the urge for discovery to the West?
3. When did the mariner's compass first come into use?
4. What city was the trading centre of the mediæval world?
5. Columbus thought the world was smaller than it is. Look up Eratosthenes and Ptolemy and find whose calculations would have spared him some of his anxiety.

For Written Work

6. Before Columbus succeeded in obtaining the support of Spain he had already tried France, Portugal, and England. If he had succeeded in England how would the history of England in the sixteenth century have been different?
7. What reasons can Columbus have had for being so certain that he would discover land to the West?
8. The voyage has been described as "The greatest event in the history of discovery." Why?
9. What difficulties had Columbus to encounter which no

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

longer exist for the explorer? Compare his achievement with Bleriot's flight of the Channel.

10. What does Columbus mean when he says, "When a man is given a vision he must follow it alone"? Do you agree? Mention other lonely visionaries in History.

11. Do you consider that seeing the light where the New Land lay is an appropriate symbol for the results of the discovery?

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CHARACTERS

IN THE ORDER OF THEIR APPEARANCE

Sir Thomas More.

Lieutenant of the Tower.

Dame Alice More, wife of More.

Margaret Roper, daughter of More.

I believe to the student
of history to read this
book is a great help
in the history of the
time.

THE DEATH OF SIR THOMAS MORE

[The best known source of our information about Sir Thomas More is the biography written by his son-in-law, William Roper. This book is particularly valuable because the people in it are so vividly portrayed ; it is full of dialogue which is so strikingly alive that it is ready-made material for a play. Almost the whole of the play printed here is made up of actual words of the principal characters as they are recorded by William Roper. It should be borne in mind that Roper wrote his *Life* some twenty years after More's death, and that he was, naturally, not present at any of the conversations which make up this play ; yet these conversations must have been often recalled among More's relatives and friends in the years which followed his death, and there is other evidence that his characters are true to actual life.

The dramatist has here compressed into a short scene conversations which took place at quite different times. For instance, the opening words were actually spoken on More's first arrival at the Tower, many months before his death ; Lady Alice came on another occasion and Margaret on yet another. Indeed, some of the conversation with Margaret belongs to a different visit from that on the day when the Charterhouse monks passed on their way to execution, a day two months before More's own execution. Again, More's last letter to Margaret was written on the eve of his death, while the conversation with the Lieutenant belongs to the fatal morning. Three distinct persons are here compressed into the character called the Lieutenant, and the dialogue between him and Margaret about the head is imaginary, though the arrangement made is historical.

Apart from these manipulations of her material, which do not falsify the essential history, the author has kept remarkably close to Roper's account. There emerge from the play three living persons : Lady Alice, practical, unimaginative, quite incapable of appreciating the qualities which make her husband one of the great figures in English

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

History ; Margaret, whose love for her father is poignantly revealed ; and More himself, full of humour, serenity, tolerance, and enormous moral courage—" the most civil of martyrs."]

SCENE.—*The Tower. Sir T. More's cell.*

TIME.—A.D. 1535.

A bare room with oak table and stool. At the back, to the left, a small recess, with a prie-dieu and crucifix. A window in the centre at the back. Sir Thomas More and the Lieutenant.

Lieut. Sir, I must ask you for your upper garment.
More (smiling, taking off his cap). Here it is, Mr. Lieutenant, here is my upper garment.

Lieut. Nay, sir, but I must have your gown. (*More removes his gown.*) And, sir, were it not well that you send home your chain of gold unto your wife or some of your children ?

More. Nay, sir, that I will not. For if I were taken in the field by mine enemies, I would they should fare somewhat the better by me.

Lieut. Sir, I remember many benefits and friendships that I have received at your hands, and I am much bounden therefore friendly to entertain you and make you good cheer. But since I cannot do so without the King's indignation, I trust you will accept my goodwill and such poor cheer as you have.

More. Mr. Lieutenant, I verily believe as you may, so are you my good friend indeed, and would as you say with your best cheer entertain me, for the which I most heartily thank you. And assure yourself, Mr. Lieutenant, I do not dislike my cheer, but whensoever I so do, then thrust me out of your doors.

Lieut. Sir Thomas, I have to inform you that I am ordered to swear your servant here appointed to attend on you, if he should hear or see you at any

THE DEATH OF SIR THOMAS MORE

time speak or write any manner of thing against the King, the Council, or the State of the Realm, he will open it to me, that I may incontinent reveal it to the Council. It grieveth me to say so much of warning unto you.

More. Mr. Lieutenant, you and I are both servants of His Majesty the King, and bounden in all things to obey him, save in those matters wherein our duty to God cometh foremost.

Lieut. Much indeed it marvelleth me that His Majesty should commit so faithful and wise a councillor to prison.

More. The hearts of kings are in God's rule and governance, which we may not gainsay.

Lieut. It is the King's pleasure that my lady, Dame Alice More, be admitted to see you.

More. His Majesty is full of favour to meward !

Lieut. If only, sir, it stood with your conscience to take the oath.

More. Well, well, be that as it will.

Lieut. (opening the door). Will your ladyship please to enter in.

[*Enter Dame Alice. Lieutenant goes out.*]

More (taking her hand affectionately). Well, my dear, well.

Dame Alice. What the good year, Mr. More, I marvel that you, that have always hitherunto been taken for so wise a man will now so play the fool to lie here in this close filthy prison, and be content to be shut up among mice and rats, when you might be abroad at your liberty, and with the favour and goodwill both of the King and his Council, if you would but do as all the bishops and best learned of this realm have done.

More. And so I have, Mistress Alice.

Alice. Why, what !—You have not taken the oath then of the King's supremacy ?

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

More. Nay, but the bishops and other good men have done according to their conscience, and so I hope, have I.

Alice. Tut, tut, Mr. More—I mean that seeing you have at Chelsea a right fair house, your library, your books, your gallery, your garden, your orchards, and all other necessities so handsomely about you, where you might be merry in the company of me, your wife, your children, and household, I muse what a God's name you mean here still thus fondly to tarry.

More. I pray thee, good Mistress Alice, tell me one thing.

Alice. What is that?

More. Is not this house as nigh heaven as my own?

Alice. Tilly vally, tilly vally.

More. How say you, Mistress Alice, is it not so?

Alice. Bone Deus, bone Deus, man, will this gear never be left?

More. Well then, Mistress Alice, if it be so, it is very well. For I see no great cause why I should much joy of my gay house, when, if I should but seven years lie buried under the ground, and then arise and come thither again, I should not fail to find some therein that would bid me get me out of the doors and tell me that it were none of mine. What cause have I then to like such a house as would so soon forget his master? Come, tell me, Mistress Alice, how long do you think we might reckon on living to enjoy it?

Alice. Some twenty years, forsooth.

More. In faith, had you said some thousand years it had been somewhat. And yet he were a bad merchant that would put himself in danger to lose Eternity for a thousand years.

Alice. Well, well, Mr. More, when will you change your note, and act like a wise man?

More. *When?* When?—Why, when gorse is out of blossom, and kissing out of fashion.

THE DEATH OF SIR THOMAS MORE

[Enter the Lieutenant, as a sign that Alice is to go.]

Alice. I see you will not be persuaded.

More. Then I prithee, good Alice, be content.
And so farewell.

Alice (breaking down and weeping). My dear husband.

[She goes out with the Lieutenant.]

More (alone, writing).

Ay, flattering fortune, look you never so fair.

Nor never so pleasantly begin to smile,

As though thou would my ruins all repair

During my life thou shalt not me beguile.

Trust I shall, God, to enter, in a while

Thy haven of heaven sure and uniform,

Ever after Thy calm, look I for no storm.

[Enter Lieutenant.]

Lieut. By the mass, Mr. More, as her ladyship saith, it is perilous striving with Princes, and therefore I could wish you somewhat to incline to the King's pleasure. Admit there were, sir, an Act of Parliament that all the realm should take me for King, would not you, Mr. More, take me for King?

More. Yes, sir, that would I.

Lieut. And I put the case further that there were an Act of Parliament that all the realm should take me for Pope, would then not you, Mr. More, take me for the Pope?

More. I will put you this case, suppose the Parliament would make a law that God should not be God, would you then, Mr. Lieutenant, say God was not God?

Lieut. No, sir, that would I not, since no Parliament may make any such law. Alas! Sir, I would fain you should be persuaded. Yet know I no means to persuade you.

More. Good Mr. Lieutenant, trouble not yourself, but be of good cheer. Only one thing now I lack, that I might see my dear daughter, Margaret—if it be the King's pleasure.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Lieut. I had it even to say to you that the lady waiteth without. If only I could first have brought you to a better mind.

More. Why, bring my better daughter to me first!

[*Lieutenant opens the door and admits Margaret, who embraces More without speaking. Lieutenant goes out.*]

Marg. Father! (*Touching his face.*) Your cheeks! how hollow they are!

More. And yours they are getting freckled! You should get some freckle-water of the Lady that sent me here. Depend on it, she hath tinctures and washes in plenty. And after all, Meg, she'll come to the same end at last.

Marg. And your dear head! How white it gets! Sit here, that I may see you better.

More. Dear Meg, thou couldst not see me better. I was never so well as now.

Marg. Still at your jests, father.

More. And how do you all at Chelsea?

Marg. How *can* we do without thee, father?

More. What, you want *More*, do you? Nay, Meg, you must be content. I believe, Meg, they that have put me here, ween they have done me a high displeasure. But I assure you on my faith, mine own dear daughter, if it had not been for my wife and you that be my children, whom I account the chief part of my charge, I would not have failed, long ere this, to have closed myself in as strait a room and straiter too.¹ But since I came hitherto without mine own desert, I trust that God of His goodness will discharge me of my care, and with His gracious help supply my want among you. I find no cause and I thank God, Meg, to reckon myself in worse case here than in my

¹ More is here referring to the monastic cell. All his life he was torn between what Reade called "the Cloister and the Hearth."

THE DEATH OF SIR THOMAS MORE

own house. For methinketh God maketh me a wanton, and setteth me on His lap and dandleth me.

Marg. Father, I have here under my cloak thy haircloth and cord. And here are some of thy books and the suckets thou lovest.

More. Thanks, dear Meg. Let us hide them here privily. (*Taking a sweet from her.*) It would tell well before the Council that on searching the prison cell of Sir Thomas More, there was found flagitiously laid up a piece of barley-sugar.

[*They both move towards the window, to hide the things in the wall. A sound of singing of psalms is heard.*]

Marg. Hark, father, there is a singing of psalms.

More (*looking out of the window*). It is the father of Sion, Mr. Reynolds,¹ and three monks of the Charterhouse. I remember me they are this day going to execution for the matter of the supremacy.

Marg. (*shuddering and turning from the window*). Alas, father !

More. Lo, dost thou not see, Meg (*drawing her to the window*), that these blessed fathers are now as cheerful going to their deaths, as bridegrooms to their marriages ? God, considering their long-continued life in most sore and grievous penance, will not suffer them to remain here in this vale of misery, but speedily hence takes them to the fruition of His everlasting deity ; whereas thy silly father, Meg, that, like a most wicked caitiff, hath passed forth the whole course of his miserable life most pitifully, God, thinking him not worthy so soon to come to that eternal felicity, leaveth him here yet, still in the world further to be plunged and turmoiled with misery.

Marg. (*hiding her face on his shoulder*). Father, I cannot look.

¹ Reynolds and three monks of the Charterhouse were executed for refusing the same oath as More refused.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

More. Mine own good daughter. (*He takes her to a seat and sits beside her.*) Sure, Meg—who would live, that could die? One might as lief be an angel shut up in a nutshell as bide here. . . . And how goes the court, Meg?

Marg. (*recovering herself*). In faith, father, never better. There's nothing else there, I hear, but dancing and disporting.

More. Never better, say'st thou? Alas, Meg, it pitieth me to remember what misery that lady, Queen Anne, must shortly come to. Those dances of hers will prove such dances that she will spurn our heads off like footballs; but 'twill not be long ere her head will dance the like dance. Knowest thou, Meg, that the Lord Chancellor and Mr. Secretary have added more words to the oath, confirming the supremacy and the King's marriage, to make it appear to the King's ears more pleasant and plausible?

Marg. And will they administer that oath to thee, too, father?

More. Yea, my daughter. Thou seest that they who have committed me hither for refusing of the oath,¹ are not able by their own law to justify my imprisonment. Surely, daughter, it is a great pity that a Christian prince should be abused with so shameful flattery. Wouldst thou have me take the oath, Meg?

Marg. (*kneeling, with her head on his knees*). Father!

More. My daughter, none of all the things that could befall me would touch me so nearly as that thou, my dearly beloved child, should desire me to over-rule my conscience.

¹ The oath declared that Henry VIII was Supreme Head of the Church. More carefully avoided speaking against the King or even advising others to refuse the oath, for he believed that to do so was an offence against the State, but he refused to make a personal rejection of the Pope's supremacy in religion.

THE DEATH OF SIR THOMAS MORE

Marg. That be far from me, father ! But oh ! that I had the clue to some secret passage or subterranean, whereby we might steal off hence together.

More. Wishes never filled a sack. I make it my business, Meg, to wish as little as I can, except that I were wiser and better. In place therefore, my daughter, of thinking of me in thy night watches as beating my wings against my cage bars, trust that God comes to look in upon me without knocking or bell-ringing. Often in spirit I am with you all, in the chapel, in the hall, in the garden, now in the hayfield with my head on thy lap. (*Noise of key in lock.*) Good speed, good Meg—I hear the key turn in the door. Keep dry eyes and a hopeful heart ; nought but unpardoned sin should make us weep for ever.

[He rises, and embracing, puts her gently away from him.]

Marg. Bless me, bless me, oh my father.

[He lays his hand upon her head, and turns slowly away, as the Lieutenant enters. Margaret, stretching out her hands towards More, still on her knees, is supported by the Lieutenant, who sees her ready to faint.]

Lieut. (gently). Courage, brave heart.

[He raises her, and she stands looking at him imploringly as More retires to his oratory, where he is seen by the audience kneeling, but with his back to Margaret.]

Marg. (low, so as not to be heard by More). I know ! I know !—it must be. (*Pressing her hands to her heart.*) It—must—be—borne—Oh God !

Lieut. (stands so as to screen her). Lean on me, lady.

Marg. (only realising the one thing). Of whom the world was not worthy. . . . Like as a father pitieth . . .

[Chokes.]

Lieut. Lady, we love him, all here.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Marg. (suddenly, grasping his arm). Is there—
(whispers) hope?

[Lieutenant looks at her in pity and sorrow without
a word or gesture.

Marg. (appealing). Nothing that—no one to—help?

Lieut. (with deep sympathy, shaking his head). Not now.

Marg. (with arms crossed on her breast, looking upwards).
There were women who could stand beneath the
Cross . . . yes, yes, my soul, I know—nought but
unpardoned sin.

[Lieutenant makes a motion to lead her away.

Marg. (yielding to be led away turns for one more look at
More, who is rapt in prayer). I will—go.

[She begins to move towards the door. Then stops,
and taking hold of the Lieutenant's arm whispers.

Marg. His—the—head? Where?

Lieut. On London Bridge.

Marg. How could—how could I—Would to beg,
pray—kneel—to the King? or to—

Lieut. The—he who does the deed—may help—for
money. (Margaret by a gesture asks “How?”) I think
a boat—beneath the bridge, ere daybreak—(Margaret
listens intently, following with her lip, the words as he
speaks)—and one on the bridge who knew, expected.

Marg. (stretching out her arms for the imagined gift). My
heart, be still. Thou shalt have it. It shall lie in thy
grave with thee. That dear and reverend head that
hath lain upon thee so oft. We'll not be parted,
please God.

[Darkness falls upon the scene. When light comes
again More is writing quietly at the table.

More (to himself). We may not look to our pleasure
to go to heaven in feather-beds. It is not the way.
(Writing.) “I cumber you, good Margaret, much, but
I would be sorry if it should be any longer than to-
morrow. For to-morrow is St. Thomas' even, and
the Octave of St. Peter, and therefore to-morrow long

THE DEATH OF SIR THOMAS MORE

I to go unto God ; that were a day very meet and convenient for me. And I never liked your manners better than when you kissed me¹ last in the street amidst my guards. For I like when daughterly love and dear charity hath no leisure to look to worldly courtesy.—Signed. Thy father, Thomas.” (*Speaking aloud.*) The charcoal will not write “*More.*”

[*Enter the Lieutenant.*]

More. Good morrow, Mr. Lieutenant. Have you gotten good news for me ?

Lieut. Alas ! Sir ! I bring a message from the King and his Council that you should forthwith prepare yourself to suffer death before nine o'clock this evening.

More. Mr. Lieutenant, for your good tidings I most heartily thank you. I have been always bounden much to the King's Highness, for the benefits and honours which he hath still most bountifully heaped upon me, and yet more bounden am I to his Grace for putting me into this place, where I have had time convenient to have remembrance of mine end. And so help me God most of all am I bound to his Highness that it hath pleased him so shortly to rid me of the miseries of this wretched world. And I will not fail most earnestly to pray for his Grace both here, and also in another world.

¹ Margaret Roper had met More at the Tower Wharf on his return from his trial and (in the words of Roper) “hastening towards him without consideration or care of herself, pressing in amongst the throng and company of the guards that with halberds and bills went round about him, ran in to him and there openly and in sight of them embraced him and kissed him. Who, well liking her most natural and dear daughterly affection towards him, gave her his fatherly blessing and many godly words of comfort besides. From whom after she was departed she, not satisfied with the former sight of him and like one that had forgotten herself, being all ravished with the entire love of her father, having respect neither to herself nor to the press of people that were about him, suddenly turned back again, ran to him as before, took him about the neck and divers times kissed him lovingly, and at last, with a full and heavy heart, was fain to depart from him.”

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Lieut. The King's pleasure is further that at your execution you shall not use many words.

More. You do well that you give me warning of his Grace's pleasure. For otherwise had I purposed at that time somewhat to have spoken, but of no matter wherewith his Grace should have had cause to be offended. Nevertheless I am ready obediently to conform myself to his Grace's commandment. And I beseech you, good Mr. Lieutenant, to be a mean unto his Highness that my daughter Margaret may be present at my burial.

Lieut. The King is well contented already that your wife, children, and other friends shall have free liberty to be present thereat.

More. Oh, how much beholden am I to his Grace, that unto my poor burial vouchsafeth to have so gracious consideration.

Lieut. (weeping). Alas ! Sir !

More. Quiet yourself, good Mr. Lieutenant, and be not discomfited. For I trust that we shall once more in heaven see each other full merrily, where we shall be sure to live and love together in joyful bliss eternally. And now I will put on my best apparel against this solemn feast.

Lieut. Nay, nay, sir. He that shall have it is but a worthless fellow.

More. What, shall I account him a worthless fellow, that will do me this day so singular a benefit ? Nay, I assure you, were it cloth of gold I would account it well bestowed on him, as St. Cyprian did, who gave his executioner thirty pieces of gold. But I have but the one angel of gold (*presenting it*) which I pray you to send him, with my hearty thanks. (*He puts on his cap and gown.*) I am ready, Mr. Lieutenant. Please you go on.

CURTAIN

THE DEATH OF SIR THOMAS MORE

FOR FURTHER READING

William Roper, *Life of Sir Thomas More*.

C. Hollis, *Sir Thomas More*; or E. K. Chambers, *Sir Thomas More*.

H. Belloc, "Sir Thomas More" (in *Characters of the Reformation*.)

QUESTIONS

1. What is the most famous of Sir Thomas More's writings?
2. What other great Lord Chancellor depicted an imaginary commonwealth?
3. It is said that when the news of More's death was brought to Henry VIII, he was playing cards with Anne Boleyn. "You are the cause of this man's death," he said to her. What measure of truth was there in the remark?
4. Find five instances of More's humour. Do you know of any other instances, not in the play?
5. Who were the Oxford Reformers?
6. Why was More's martyrdom more important than Fisher's?

For Written Work

7. Do you think More's sacrifice was worth while?
8. Compare the situation of More with that of Socrates or Pastor Niemöller.
9. More has been compared to Burke as a "reforming conservative." What did each seek to reform and conserve?
10. "Four things were killed when they killed More. First, they killed learning. . . . Secondly, they killed justice. . . . Thirdly, they killed laughter. . . . But fourthly, and it was what mattered most, they killed holiness." Explain and amplify this statement.
11. Write a study of More's character as revealed in this play.
12. Was it obstinacy or principle that drove More to martyrdom?

A ROOM IN THE TOWER

A Play in One Act

By HUGH STEWART

CHARACTERS

IN ORDER OF THEIR APPEARANCE

Mrs. Tylney.
Lady Jane Grey.
Mrs. Ellen.
Mary Tudor.

A ROOM IN THE TOWER

[This play gives a picture of four real people in imaginary conversations. There is no evidence that Queen Mary visited Jane Grey in the Tower, though she had sent her confessor, Feckenham, to reason with her on the very day that Jane's father joined the rebels. There is little doubt that she intended to pardon Jane and Dudley (she told the Spanish Ambassador that the death sentences would not be carried out), until Wyatt's rebellion showed her the danger of leniency. Jane must have realised that she was doomed as soon as she heard the news of her father's action.]

The play shows some of the tragic results of that rising. It resulted in the change in Mary from the just and merciful woman we see in the play to the persecuting bigot who lives in the popular memory as "Bloody Mary." It resulted, further, in the death of a young, innocent girl to whom life meant much, who had already at the age of seventeen the culture of the best of Renaissance England, the piety of the best of the Reformers, a deep love of the English country, and a nature such that even her enemies spoke well of her. In the religious and political quarrels of the Tudor period there was a tragic waste of valuable lives, and perhaps the death of Jane Grey is the saddest, for she was entirely a victim.]

SCENE.—*The curtain rises slowly on a sombre prison room in a house on Tower Green, 1554.*

A high window at the back overlooks the site of the scaffold. L., a door, and R., a door leading to an adjoining room. An oak table, writing-paper, and books, etc. Plain oak chairs. We discover a grey-haired waiting-woman sitting by the table. She has a needle and thread in her hand and a silk garment on her lap, but she is not sewing, only looking straight before her, quite still. A young girl's voice startles her from her reverie.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Voice (off). Tylney !

Tylney. Madam.

Voice. Is it time, Tylney ?

Tylney (aggrieved). You've not been sleeping. . . .

[*Jane Grey, a prisoner in the Tower (with her husband, Guildford Dudley, both under sentence of death), appears in the doorway, R. She is slight and small and her hands are constantly moving in quick nervous gestures. Her face is rather pale and drawn. Rather emotional, she is always simple and sincere.*

Jane. I can't sleep. It's so cold in there. I have tried, but it's useless . . . useless.

Tylney. You look so tired.

Jane. I haven't slept for . . . it seems years.

Tylney. Have you looked in the mirror? Have you seen those dark circles under your eyes ?

Jane. Mirrors don't tell the truth, they only show us masks. But what does it matter how I look? Few people will ever see me again. What time is it?

Tylney. It's still early, madam.

Jane. Whenever I sleep, I dream.

Tylney. Of what, madam ?

Jane. Of the place outside the window. I dream they are killing Guildford. I stand at the window and watch. It's horrible because I'm not with him . . . I can't move !

Tylney. It is only a dream.

Jane (by the window). He looks up to me standing here, and when he sees me, he tries to smile so bravely. Then he takes off his ruff, and kneels down . . .

Tylney (leading her away). Madam dear, you must put these thoughts from your mind.

Jane. Ah, if I could, Tylney . . . if I could. Last night I dreamt I saw my father's head on a pike. It was lifted up and waved at me through that dreadful

A ROOM IN THE TOWER

window. His mouth was open and the blood streamed down the staff.

Tylney. Your mind is distorted with all this trouble.

Jane. Why have they put me into this room? When they erected the scaffold the last time,¹ the carpenters' hammer hit the nails into my brain. It was maddening, unceasing . . . knock . . . knock . . . knock . . . knock. . . . Is there any hope, Tylney?

Tylney. Of course there is; the Queen is very merciful and you are her cousin. Your youth alone . . .

Jane. Youth! (*Laughs.*) You can speak about youth to me! In July I entered this palace as Queen; I was its mistress, the mistress of all England. And now . . . what am I?

Tylney. We must forget the past now.

Jane. It's so difficult to forget; what is there to do here except to remember? (*With a great effort.*) Tell me, do they love their new Queen? There is some trouble, isn't there?

Tylney. It will prove serious, I'm afraid. She is so headstrong. . . .

Jane (cutting her short). What is it?

Tylney. Well, it is feared that risings will break out throughout the country unless she will be ruled in time.

Jane. Ruled?

Tylney. The people feel strongly against her proposed marriage.²

Jane. It won't be my cousin who will give in.

Tylney. Parliament has presented a Petition against the Spanish marriage.

¹ For the execution of Northumberland and accomplices, August 1553.

² Mary lost much of the popularity in which she came to the throne by her determination to marry Philip of Spain. It was against this marriage that Wyatt's rebellion was aimed.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Jane. Parliament is so greedy. They expect us to sacrifice everything, our whole life's happiness, everything a woman treasures most, for what? For the country, for the sake of the people. What do they give up for their country? What are they willing, themselves, to sacrifice? (*By the window.*) Oh, Tylney, look! How beautiful it is, how beautiful those trees are below with the sun glimmering through the leaves. Like tiny green lamps . . . aren't they?

Tylney. Are they, madam? Those trees are very, very old.

Jane. I like them better from up here; you can't see their tortured, twisted roots.

Tylney (brightly). Shall I cut you a branch or two of leaves to-morrow? It would cheer the place up. I'll try to get you some flowers too; would you like that?

Jane. I'm sorry, what did you say?

Tylney. Would you like me to bring you some flowers, madam?

Jane. Oh, please.

Tylney. What flowers would you like?

Jane. I love every flower; they are all sweet. We have such a quiet garden at home. Lavender hedges and rosemary. Arbours loaded with red and yellow roses. I used to pick the tight, sweet-smelling buds and put them in my hair. There's a little pool I sat beside to watch my goldfish, they were so pretty . . . they used to nibble the crumbs from my finger-tips. I remember stealing there on warm evenings to listen to the nightingale. There are no nightingales here, no singing birds . . . only the croak of the raven, and they forbode evil!

Tylney. Come, madam, perhaps you won't be here very much longer.

Jane (slowly). Not very much longer!

Tylney. I mean, you may . . .

A ROOM IN THE TOWER

Jane (unheeding). They will come for me soon. Their footsteps will echo on those stairs . . . then someone will open the door and ask me if I am ready. (*Her hands creep to her throat.*) "I am quite ready, my Lords." They will lead me down . . . round . . . and round . . . and round the staircase . . . out into the air, and the light . . . everybody will gaze at me, perhaps some of them will feel a little sorry . . .

Tylney. Tell me more about your garden.

Jane. My garden?

Tylney. Yes, your garden at home.

Jane. Home? When my father told me that Edward had died, that I was Queen of England, I was frightened then. Terribly frightened. I believe I fainted.

Tylney. Poor dear.

Jane (after a pause, sadly). Sometimes I'm afraid that . . . that they only use me as a rung in the ladder. (*Breaking off.*) Oh, but what does it matter? What does anything matter any more? You don't know what my life has been, Tylney. My books were my only solace, my only friends. . . .

Tylney. But, madam, you are still very young.

Jane. What do you mean?

Tylney. They say the Queen has a forgiving nature.

Jane. I'm seventeen; is that young? I don't look young, do I?

Tylney. You are tired now. If you could only sleep.

Jane. Where is my husband? Why can't I see him again? I only want to touch him . . . to feel his arms round me, to be sure, to be sure that he wanted me. I must beg her, implore her to let me see him. Perhaps she will understand, and have compassion on us. O God, if she spares us . . . we may be free to-morrow, in a few hours! Guildford and I . . .

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we will go away into the country and forget, and begin life again, together. I think he loves me enough for that. (*She moves from the window.*) Oh, Tylney, I don't understand. How strange a place the world is. I, who have never purposely hurt anyone in my life !

Tylney. You must put your trust in the Queen ; she understands.

Jane. What ?

Tylney. Your position, madam. How you have been used. How blameless you are.

Jane (*presses her hands to her forehead*). I don't know. Am I less to be blamed than Guildford, or Northumberland, or my father . . . or the Archbishop¹ ? (*A silence.*) Listen . . . Listen !

Tylney. Madam ?

Jane. Did you hear ?

Tylney. What is it, madam ?

Jane. I thought I heard footsteps.

Tylney (*listening*). I hear nothing.

Jane. Someone is coming.

Tylney. I expect it's Mrs. Ellen. It can't mean that the Queen has arrived ? And yet I told her . . .

[*The door L. opens quickly and Mrs. Ellen, a second attendant to Jane, comes in, closing it behind her. She is younger than Mrs. Tylney and obviously excited.*]

Ellen. The Queen is here, madam ! She is being received at Traitor's Gate !

Tylney. Where is she ?

Ellen. She was mounting the steps beneath St. Thomas's Tower.

[*A roll of muffled drums is heard in the distance, and a herald of trumpets. Ellen crosses to the window.*]
She will be on the Green at any moment.

¹ Cranmer, who had been tried and sentenced together with Jane and Guildford Dudley in the previous November.

A ROOM IN THE TOWER

Jane. Please, you will both stay with me? Don't leave me alone.

Tylney. No, no.

Jane. This means everything in the world, or . . .

Tylney (interrupting). Quickly, madam, there's your hair to be done.

Jane. Yes . . . my hair.

[*They both exit R. Ellen remains at the window and keeps them acquainted through the open door with what is going on below.*]

Ellen. She should have left the wharf now. . . . I expect she is passing under the gateway by the Hall Tower. Yes, I was right, here are her gentlemen, madam; they are walking by the row of beeches next to the wall which divides off her apartments. Now she has just entered through the arch leaning on my Lord's arm. He is telling her a joke, it seems; they are laughing a great deal. She is in fine humour, madam, God be praised; the Queen has a sour temper at times, I've heard. The gentlemen are waiting for her . . . she is joining them now, and . . . yes! They are coming across the grass, towards the Lieutenant's house. Oh, gracious! What high shoes she's wearing. She nearly fell then, if it hadn't been for my Lord's arm. (*She turns round.*) My heart's beating so I can hardly stand up myself. Are you ready, madam?

[*Jane enters, wearing a cap over her hair. She is still very pale, but she carries herself proudly.*]

Jane. I have decided to meet the Queen alone.

Ellen. Very well, madam. You won't need me, then?

Jane (smiling). I won't need either of you. Return when the Queen has left.

Ellen. Very well, madam.

[*She kisses Jane's hand and exits door up L.*]

Jane. Tylney.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

[*Tylney enters holding a diamond pendant.*

Tylney. Coming, madam. Here is your diamond pendant. Let me put it on for you.

Jane. Do. I will feel Guildford is closer to me. He gave it to me.

Tylney. It's very pretty. (*She puts it on Jane.*)

Jane. Your fingers are trembling. Tylney, look at me. . . . Tell me, why tears?

Tylney. You're so wonderful, my lady.

Jane. Am I?

Tylney. So calm.

Jane. I'm not frightened now, it's all gone suddenly. While you were arranging my hair I was praying, and God has heard me, and comforted me, that's all. Our fate is in His hands, I can't struggle against it; indeed, I must not. You must go now.

Tylney (kissing her hand). God bless you, madam!

Jane. God bless you!

[*Tylney exits L. Jane stands motionless. Voices are heard outside the door, L.*

Mary (without). Leave us, gentlemen. We shall not be long here.

[*The door is opened for the Queen, and she stands for a moment on the threshold. Her lips are thin and down-turned, but her eyes are not unkind and easily light up with enthusiasm, or anger.*

Cousin Jane?

Jane. I am Jane Grey.

Mary (after a pause). You have changed.

[*Mary advances, carefully because of her high heels. The door is closed.*

(*Considering her.*) The daughter of my Duke of Suffolk. . . . I had not thought of my cousin like this. Quite beautiful too! (*She laughs.*) It's strange, our family has rarely been famed for good looks before. You may sit. Which relative is it who has been so generous? Not your father, surely?

A ROOM IN THE TOWER

Jane. You are pleased to jest, madam.

Mary. Tush ! No doubt those charms are responsible for your fame. We can see our Lords have acted wisely ; what hope have I against such a creature ? Men are so susceptible to fine features.

Jane (protesting). You are laughing at me. . . .

Mary. Troy was laid waste for Helen.

Jane. Have you no feeling ?

Mary. Come, madam, I'm sorry to have to see you in such a place as this. You have been moved from the King's House ?

Jane (in a low voice). Yes. Does that mean . . . that it will be soon now ?

Mary. I know nothing about it.

Jane. This window directly overlooks the place. Is that so that I can . . . prepare myself ?

Mary (frowns). I shall see that you are removed within a few days. Is that your wish ?

Jane. It is my wish.

Mary. Very well, I shall instruct the Lieutenant. Were you happy in Leicestershire ?

Jane. When I was learning ; Doctor Aylmer was so patient and gentle. He made life seem so much more to me.

Mary. Your tutor ?

Jane. Yes, madam.

Mary. We have heard of your great learning, Jane.

Jane. My father gave great care to my education.

Mary. Like my own, I think that is all I have to thank him for. He was very proud of my achievements. You speak in Latin, and Greek ?

Jane. Oh, yes, I love them dearly.

Mary (indicating the table). What are these papers here ?

Jane. Some Hebrew I have been studying.

Mary. Hebrew too ! (*Examining the papers.*) Do you know the tongue ?

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Jane. I wish I knew it better.

Mary. I see you write in Arabic.

Jane. A little, madam.

Mary. My mother was my first teacher in Latin. When I was nine I replied in that tongue to the commissioners sent from Flanders. I can see the King now . . . how proud he was . . . (*She sighs.*) Have you repented, child?

Jane. Have I sinned, madam?

Mary. Why are you here?

Jane. Because of man's ambition.

Mary. You answer with a brief tongue.

Jane. Oh, madam, can you think it was my own desire so far to reach above myself? Indeed, I dared not of my own accord. Such a position held nothing but terror for me.

Mary. I can believe you.

Jane. All that I could ask from life . . .

Mary. What is that?

Jane. My husband's love, I think that is all.

Mary. A woman's life is one of sacrifice, and for such worthless men. You love Guildford Dudley?

Jane (simply). More than anyone in the world.

Mary. They say I should wed an English Lord and I say I will not. We shall see! There is not one I could care for; I know them too well. They are perverse, pig-headed fools! Yet you say you still love this . . . this man. The traitor who usurped our throne and set aside our Divine Right, as something of less importance than his own pride.

Jane. That fatal pride.

Mary. It is fatal to oppose God's will; people have discovered that and many more will discover it in the future. There are things which must be accomplished and which I will accomplish . . . alone if need be. It is necessary to proceed cautiously now, but they will

A ROOM IN THE TOWER

be done before I die. (*She turns to Jane.*) Why did you plead guilty?

Jane. I am not very strong.

Mary. They dared to threaten you?

Jane. I was afraid, perhaps.

Mary. Was that all? Your father told you to plead guilty? Answer me!

Jane. Oh, madam . . .

Mary. Answer me!

Jane. I am guilty.

Mary. Do you know where your father is now?

Jane. What have you done to him?

Mary. Do you care?

Jane. He is dead?

Mary. He deserved to be hanged like a common footpad.

Jane. What have you done?

Mary. I cannot understand you, Jane. He is not worth a moment's anxiety. That is why I have spared him. He is such a fool; I think he has been frightened enough.

Jane. You have spared my father?

Mary. He was shown the dungeons, and he has seen a man on the rack. I would not stain my shoe to crush a worm under foot.

Jane (on her knees). Oh, God bless you! God bless you! Your mercy will be rewarded. (*Her voice faltering.*) Madam, there is something . . .

Mary. Well?

Jane. If you think me bold, I am only made so by your exceeding goodness. It urges me to hope, to believe that you will extend your compassion to . . . to the Archbishop Cranmer . . . (*The Queen starts.*) Oh, cousin, I beseech you to spare the old man.

Mary. I must have no heart.

Jane. But you are not heartless, you are not. You have shown me how great it is.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Mary (touched). You are the first person to say that to me.

Jane. The Primate is old . . .

Mary. He is a traitor like the rest of you !

Jane. No, madam, he is not in entire possession of his strength. When he consented to my succession it was only after a long period in which he opposed it. He has given many years in devoted allegiance to the Crown. Oh, cousin, don't dishonour him in his old age ; he was worn down, he feared for his life . . . don't let them kill him !

Mary. They cannot, without my consent.

Jane. Then have mercy on him ; let his gratitude be added to mine, I implore you.

Mary. I shall see no hurt comes to him ; that is all I can promise now.

Jane. You promise that ? [*Mary nods.*]
But you are the Sovereign.

Mary (sadly). I am only a woman, Jane. Ah, if I had been a man . . . everything would be so easy. I should command and dictate and make England glorious. I should throw off this heavy cloak of hypocrisy. I should be a slave to no living person, only to God.

Jane (softly). Your people believe in you.

Mary. Do they ? Do you think they do ?

Jane. Yes.

Mary. But they don't understand. I am not a hard woman, and God knows my life has been hard. I must do these things if it breaks my heart. To restore our violated faith and unite, with bonds of steel, the two greatest countries in the world. That is my mission, and I have no wish to die with the certainty it has failed. (*To Jane.*) In a few days you will leave this prison-house, for ever.

Jane (quietly, after a pause). I don't think I can die, as I ought to die, unless I see him again.

A ROOM IN THE TOWER

Mary. Your husband ?

Jane. Yes. You see my life has been so empty ; if there is no life after death . . . nothing, no afterwards . . . I . . . I couldn't bear it ! It's all that I have left . . . that I will be with him in heaven.

Mary. My poor child, you need not be afraid.

Jane. I'm not really afraid, only . . . sometimes . . .

Mary. I mean you to go into life, not death.

Jane (*in a whisper*). Life !

Mary. I pardon you, Jane.

Jane. Into life ! Both of us !

Mary. I am satisfied of your innocence.

Jane. Both of us ?

Mary (*evading the question*). There is life waiting for you, full of sunshine, and joy, beautiful things . . . and children.

Jane. Oh, madam . . . madam ! (*With shaking hands she raises the hem of the Queen's skirt to her lips.*) My happiness . . . I can't express it. I feel . . . it's so great . . . it won't let me speak.

Mary (*tenderly*). I understand. There is no cause for you to kneel.

Jane. We shall pray for you and bless you . . . in every prayer of our lives.

Mary. Remember me, when you are happy, will you ?

Jane. Always.

Mary. I shall need all your prayers. It is hard . . . it is so hard sometimes, to do my duty. I wish I were finished with it all, but I must go onwards. (*She rises.*) Duty comes before everything. Everything. I must leave you. I have been too long already.

Jane. Must you . . . must you go ?

Mary (*nods*). Duty compels me ; it has been like that, always. Farewell.

[*She moves away, and turns for a moment at the door.*]

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Be wise, Jane. (*Off stage.*) Your arm, my Lord, please. I tire so quickly now.

[*The door closes. Jane remains on her knees crying quietly for several minutes. When she rises she walks across to the window. The roll of drums is heard again. Tylney comes in, L. She has just heard some fateful message, which she does not know, at first, how to impart to her mistress.*

Jane (*without looking up*). Is that you, Tylney?

Tylney. Yes, madam.

Jane. Dear Tylney . . . you have been so kind to me. So few people have been kind in my life. (*She takes her hands.*) Why do you look so pale? And . . . yes, there are still tears in your eyes.

Tylney (*in a strained voice*). The Queen . . .

Jane. You do care for me, don't you?

Tylney. Oh, madam, very greatly.

Jane. Then why are there tears?

Tylney. She has pardoned you? I knew.

Jane. Both of us! I can't believe it yet, I can't believe it. I'm not sure . . . that I'm not asleep really. It may only be a dream.

Tylney. Perhaps you are . . . asleep.

Jane. If I am dreaming, don't wake me. Please don't wake me. (*With her arms around Tylney's neck.*) Oh, Tylney, we are free . . . free, don't you understand? I won't be here any more. I don't like this room, it's full of ghosts.

Tylney. Madam, listen . . .

Jane (*in ecstasy*). She said in a few days, only a few days more. How can I live till then? Guildford, Guildford, I wish I were with you now. Don't you realise what this means? It means life together . . . it means we can walk under the sky, and hear the birds again; it means you.

Tylney (*anguished*). Oh, madam, don't! I have something I must tell you at once. [*Jane turns slowly.*

A ROOM IN THE TOWER

Jane. Tylney, what is the matter with you? What are you saying?

Tylney. Oh, my dear lady . . . the news has just been brought.

Jane (in sudden terror). My God! What is it? What is it?

Tylney. Your father has joined the conspirators!

Jane. My father . . .

Tylney. Against Her Majesty. He and Sir Thomas Wyatt have occupied Rochester with their men. They have issued a proclamation . . . against the Queen's marriage.

Jane (after a long pause). It's not true. It's not true! It's a false report. . . . He couldn't! I won't believe it!

Tylney. God forgive them, it is the truth. I heard it from the messenger myself.

Jane. He was lying!

Tylney. I fear . . .

Jane (almost voiceless). God wouldn't do this to me?

Tylney. Everywhere they are rising against her, and joining Sir Thomas. They say he will march on London. It's revolution!

Jane. Revolution!

Tylney. We thought you should be told, now.

Jane (her voice breaking). Yes . . . yes, that was right. But what have I done? What have I done to deserve this? Does she know . . . did she know?

Tylney (shakes her head). Not yet.

[*Jane has gone very white; she realises this move has sealed her fate. The roll of drums is heard again, very faintly. Tylney bursts into tears.*]

Jane. Then this is the end. . . . I think it was too wonderful to be true. I was born to suffer, but . . . this is hurting so.

[*The drums are heard more loudly. She suddenly puts her arms around Tylney's shoulders.*]

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Oh, no, Tylney . . . you mustn't cry, you mustn't cry, for my sake. Look ! Such a beautiful sunset . . . there must be a God to create that. Death holds no terror for me now, I know life won't end with the grave, in darkness. There is a great glory shining behind the clouds. . . . I feel no pain . . . my Spirit will spring rejoicing into the Eternal Light, where I hope the mercy of God will receive it.

CURTAIN

FOR FURTHER READING

Harrison Ainsworth, *The Tower of London* (historical novel).

Helen Simpson, *The Spanish Marriage, 1554.*

R. Davey, *The Nine Days' Queen.*

QUESTIONS

1. Draw a table illustrating Jane Grey's descent from Henry VII.
2. What did Mary think was her mission in life ?
3. What are the real elements of conflict in this play ?

For Written Work

4. What are the factors which account for the failure of the attempt to put Jane on the throne ?
5. What do you know of the intelligence and culture of other members of the Tudor family ?
6. The stage directions describe Mary as having " lips thin and downturned." What experiences in her past life may have left their marks on her appearance ?
7. Mary came to the throne amidst general rejoicings, but few lamented when she died. Account for her early popularity and its decline.
8. How does the play help you to see Jane Grey as a real person ?

ON BOARD THE "GOLDEN HIND"

1578

A Play in One Act

By LOUIS N. PARKER

CHARACTERS

IN THE ORDER IN WHICH THEY APPEAR OR SPEAK

Diego, a young Maroon, non-speaking.

Captain Wynter.

Mr. Caube.

Rev. Francis Fletcher.

Captain Chester.

Mr. Vicary.

Captain Thomas.

Mr. Charles.

Francis Drake.

Tom Moone.

Bright }
Brewer } sailors.
Cooke }

Gregory.

Thomas Doughty.

ON BOARD THE "GOLDEN HIND"

1578

[On November 15, 1577, Drake put out from Plymouth on his famous voyage round the world. Its objects were partly sheer piracy and partly to deal a blow at Spanish shipping communications in the Pacific—not originally to sail round the world,—but his intentions were not openly declared in England. Queen Elizabeth had personally received Drake in audience, and, while agreeing privately to take shares in the enterprise, had insisted that she must be kept in official ignorance of its real purpose ; and that Lord Burleigh, the Lord Treasurer, must be kept in real ignorance, because his prudent nature would recoil from the danger of provoking Spain into war. Burleigh and all but a few of the war party in the Council were told that the ships were going to Egypt.

Among the gentlemen adventurers in the expedition were the brothers Thomas and John Doughty. Thomas was an intimate friend of Drake, who appears to have admired and trusted him to an astonishing degree. Yet he returned Drake's confidence by secretly telling Burleigh of their plans. On the voyage he soon began to foment discord and he seems to have encouraged the belief put about by his brother among the sailors that he possessed powers of conjuring evil spirits ; so that Drake himself at length became convinced that the ill-luck which dogged the voyage from the start must be the result of Doughty's black arts. The Doughty brothers finally so provoked Drake that he placed them under arrest, and on June 19, 1578, at the very spot where, fifty years before, Magellan had hanged some of his crew for mutiny, Thomas Doughty was tried for sedition.

This play is based on the account of Francis Fletcher, the chaplain, who was present at the trial. The playwright, like the author of *The Discovery*, has seen the dramatic elements in the conflict between the leader of a great venture and his mutinous followers, and the situation is here the more poignant because of Drake's former friendship for

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the instigator of revolt. The play gives a good, though not, of course, complete impression of Drake's character and calls back to life a very important moment in the history of English sea-power.]

SCENE.—*The Admiral's quarters on board the "Pelican," seen diagonally. The back, being the side of the ship, slopes slightly inward. It is interrupted by a semicircular bay or turret, projecting outward, which, as well as the flat part, is pierced with practically continuous large square port-holes glazed with small panes, the upper being of stained glass with heraldic devices. The stern, R., slopes sharply outward and is all glazed. There is a door opening to a gallery with a richly carved and gilded handrail, which runs round the stern of the ship. In the centre of the partition on the left, which is perpendicular, is a broad staircase, leading up to the deck, and curtained off; on each side of this is a small door; that in front leads to the galley, that at the back to the Admiral's bedroom. The thickness of the oaken sides of the ship can be seen through the port-holes, but within the room is panelled in rare woods, and there are hangings of Flemish tapestry where possible. The floor is covered with handsome rugs; the beams of the ceiling, slightly curved, are carved, and the boards they support are painted with heraldic devices, among which a Golden Hind "trippant" is conspicuous. Candelabra hang from the beams and are fixed to the walls. In the centre of the room is an oblong black oak table covered with silver dishes of fruit, silver plates, Venetian flagons and Venetian goblets. At the head of the table, R., is a richly carved chair, with a high leather back on which the Golden Hind is stamped. In one corner of the room is a terrestrial globe. Instruments of navigation and charts are lying about. There is a service table at the back. The stern, R., is raised one step. The whole effect is one of sober splendour. Beyond the port-holes the sea shimmers, and in the near distance the coast is seen.*

The disposition of the stage may be modified according to circumstances, providing the entrances are in the right places.

The indications R. and L. are taken from the actors', not the audience's, point of view.

When the curtain rises four musicians (theorbo, viol, viola-d'amore, and viola da gamba) are playing in one corner of the cabin, R. Drake's chair is empty. Fletcher is at the foot of the table; Wynter on the right of Drake's chair; Chester on its left; Thomas next to Chester; Vicary next to Thomas; Charles on Fletcher's left; Caube next to Charles. They are drinking and laughing. Diego is serving wine.

Wynter. Why did the Captain-General leave the table?

Caube (with a laugh). Drake grows daily more moody.

Wynter (warningly). Now, Mr. Caube——!

Caube. Well, Captain Wynter, am I not i' the right?

Fletcher (half rising to look towards the balcony). He seems lost in a day-dream.

Chester. Can you see him, parson?

Fletcher. Ay, Captain Chester; he's looking seaward, and his brow's clouded.

Vicary (laughing). Small wonder! I warrant he's musing on the rope he'll hang by if ever we reach England again.

Thomas. For shame, Mr. Vicary!

Charles. Ho! no such righteous anger, Captain Thomas! Your Drake is too high-handed, and will land himself in trouble. Hath he not 'clapped Thomas and John Doughty, his superior officers, in prison?

Chester (hotly). Mr. Charles, Mr. Charles, you know very well 'twas the only way to curb their mutinous talk.

Wynter (similarly). And, as for superior officers, the Captain-General hath none.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Caube. What ! a sailor superior to soldiers ?

Wynter. On this expedition.

Charles. Ho ! this expedition ! To encompass the world ! As if that could be done !

Thomas (violently). Drake'll do it.

Vicary. Not Drake nor another. We're doomed men. How are we to win through these hellish straits ?

Chester. Where the Portugee went we can.

Caube. Magellan had but one ship. Drake hath four lame ducks to nurse.

Wynter. I know not by what right you and Mr. Vicary and Mr. Charles—landsmen—offer an opinion.

Caube. We are sent by my Lord Burleigh to see that your hair-brained corsair waste not her Grace's ships, nor the lives of her mariners.

Vicary. Nor doth not offend Spain, nor break not the laws.

Wynter. Shall I tell you what that sounds like to me ? It sounds unpleasantly like spying.

<i>Caube</i>	} (<i>simultaneously leaping to their feet</i>).	{	Unsay that !
<i>Vicary</i>			Do you call us spies ?
<i>Charles</i>			Take it back !

[*Uproar.*

[*Drake comes slowly from R. The uproar subsides ; all sit except Caube and Vicary. Drake takes in the situation.*

Vicary (to give himself a countenance, lifts his glass).
Mr. Caube, I drink to you.

Caube (similarly). I—I thank you, Mr. Vicary.

[*They bow to each other, drink, and sit down.*

Drake (with an ironical smile). I rejoice to see I was mistaken. I thought your voices were raised in anger.

[*He sits in his great chair.*

Wynter (grimly). Only the old croaking, sir.

Drake. Because I have laid the Doughtys by the heels ?

Caube (hotly). Ay, then ! What authority have you over them ? When was it known that English soldiers served under a sailor ?

Drake (calmly). It was never hitherto known. Until this voyage, English sailors and English ships have been at the bidding of landmen. (*He brings his fist down on the table.*) That is folly ! For a soldier on board ship is no better than a sailor on horseback. (*With a laugh*) He is worse ; for he is very seasick. (*With great emphasis*) Wherefore, never again will I serve under a soldier, and he who setteth himself against that—whosoever he be—must abide the consequence.

Vicary (angrily). And that is why the Doughtys, who are soldiers——

Drake (sternly). Enough ! (*After a short pause, in his ordinary tones*) I have more urgent matters to impart to you.

[He rises. At a signal from him Diego beckons to the musicians, and they go out by the staircase.]

Drake (standing). Gentlemen, we are nearing the worst of our voyage.

Caube (rather impudently). Lord save us ! As if there'd been any best !

Drake (taking no notice beyond a rapid glance). St. Julian's Bay, where we now lie, is the threshold of Magellan's Straits.

Thomas. 'Tis the devil's own land.

Vicary. 'Tis accurst for Magellan's cruelty. For here he murdered one of his captains, hanged another, and a third he marooned.

Drake (sternly). They had mutinied. By the Lord, Mr. Vicary, I would have done the same ! (*Silence.*) But I was saying. In the face of coming dangers our little fleet must be made handier. I shall break up Tom Moone's ship, the *Christopher*. But then we

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

shall have nothing to remind us of our well-wisher, Mr. Christopher Hatton.¹

Wynter (bitterly). Oh, ay ! We shall have his friends, the Doughtys !

Vicary (hotly). What have you against the Doughtys ?

Drake (motioning silence). Wherefore, in Mr. Hatton's honour, I propose to re-name this ship—the *Pelican*—the *Golden Hind*. Thus, Mr. Wynter's *Elizabeth* shall carry the Queen's name (*with his own meaning*), the name we love ; Mr. Thomas's *Marigold* shall remind us of English meadows ; and the *Golden Hind* (*pointing to the device on the ceiling*) shall bear Mr. Hatton's cognisance into new waters. My masters, drink with me : Good luck, fair winds, and smooth seas to the *Golden Hind* !

All (but Vicary) rise. The *Golden Hind* !—Mr. Drake !

Drake (surprised). Mr. Vicary——?

Vicary. I cannot drink with you, Mr. Drake. (*Amazement.*) This pretended honour to Mr. Hatton is mere mockery while you keep his friends the Doughtys in prison.

[*Uproar for and against.*

Drake (bringing his fist down on the table). Silence ! (*Coldly*) Mr. Vicary, if you cannot stand with me, you cannot sit with me.

Charles (hotly). If Mr. Vicary goes, I go with him !

Caube. And I !

Fletcher. Peace, gentlemen ! Peace !

Vicary (going). And I make bold to tell you that every soldier and every gentleman in the fleet thinks with me. And so I wish you a good digestion !

[*Vicary, Charles, and Caube swagger up the stairs : Drake leaves his seat and walks to and fro.*

¹ Christopher Hatton, an influential supporter at Court of the expedition. Thomas Doughty had been his secretary.

Thomas. How long will you suffer this, Mr. Drake? From the moment we lost sight of the Lizard, the Doughtys have stirred up this mutinous spirit.

Wynter. We cannot go forward while Thomas Doughty is with us. If you loosen him he breeds mischief, if you bind him his friends breed trouble.

Chester. He aims at your life, sir! He aims at your life!

Wynter. Bring him to trial, and be convinced!

[*Enter Tom Moone, down the companion, with papers. Drake meets him.*]

Tom. Mr. Thomas Doughty, Admiral.

Drake (with a frown). What now?

Tom. Mr. Gregory reports he is raising mutiny among his men.

Drake. God's patience!

Tom (offering the papers). These were found on him; showing he had stirred up the officers to kill you.

Drake. Let me see! (*After a glance at them he throws them on the table, and sinks despondently on a chair.*) And I loved him!

Wynter, Thomas, and Chester (together). Make an end on't! Bring him to trial! Short shrift!

Drake (rising abruptly). Masters, summon your officers and men. Diego, beat the assembly. Mr. Wynter, send Thomas Doughty guarded.

Wynter. And John?

Drake. One is enough.

[*Exeunt Fletcher, Wynter, Thomas, Chester, and Diego, up the companion.*]

Tom. The Lord be praised! You be come to your senses at last, Admiral!

Drake. God give me strength to do the right.

[*Exit into his cabin.*]

Tom (calling at the galley door). Brewer! Bright!
(*They enter.*) Lift thicky table on to platform (indi-

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cating R.). Put big chair behind 'un ; a chair o' both sides.

[The men do as they are told, and remove the plates, dishes, and glasses to the service table.]

Bright. Do look like assizes to Tavistock.

Tom. That's what 'tis. Doughty's coming to trial at last.

Brewer. By Gor ! 'Twere time thicky warlock¹ was laid by the heels ! He'd a sunk the whole fleet.

Bright. Be sure ! Why, he called fog and storms out o' his cap-case, so a did.

Brewer. Said a cud conjure wi' any man. Said a cud poison a man so's a wudden die, not for a twelve-month.

Bright. Purty thing for a man to carry about in's belly !

[Enter Vicary, Charles, Caube, Gregory, tumultuously down the companion. All the following is spoken almost simultaneously.]

Vicary. He hath no lawful power !

Charles. What commission hath he ?

Gregory. I say he's in the right !

[Enter Wynter, Thomas, Chester, Fletcher, similarly.]

Wynter. We shall be rid of a traitor.

Thomas. High time !

[Enter mariners. Among them Cooke.]

Brewer (shouting to them as they enter). A trial ! Thomas Doughty's on trial !

Cooke. Should be t'other way round.

Brewer (to him). Shall I knock thy lubberly girt² head off thee ?

[Enter more sailors, until the cabin is a seething mass of gesticulating, shouting men.]

Cooke (shouting). Shall we stand by and see this ? Mr. Vicary, take the lead !

¹ Wizard.

² Great.

Vicary. Not I, Cooke ! I'm but a private venturer.
Charles !

Shouts. Charles ! Charles !

Wynter (to Thomas). This begins to look black !

Thomas. Hold your hanger¹ loose.

Shouts. Down with Drake !

Tom (furious). What traitor cried "Down with Drake" ?

Caube (shouting). Doughty, here !

[Doughty's friends collect round Charles and Caube.

Fletcher. Madmen ! Hold your peace !

Thomas. Drake, here !

[Drake's friends collect round the captains. Weapons are drawn. Uproar. Enter Drake. Sudden hush, with threatening murmurs. Drake goes calmly to his seat behind the table on the dais.

Drake. Captain Thomas, on my left. You shall be Assessor. Mr. Gregory, you shall act as Provost Marshal. Mr. Wynter, is the accused on board ?

Wynter. Yes, Admiral.

Drake. Then, Mr. Gregory, fetch him.

[Exit Gregory.

[The murmurs increase. They threaten to burst into shouts. Drake raises his hand. Silence.

Drake. My masters, I see by your faces you know what is toward, and like it not. (*Murmurs*) Neither do I. But I am not here to pleasure you or myself, but to do justice. (*Burst of protest. Drake unhooks his sword and lays it on the table before him.*) I lay my sword on the table. Now whosoever raises his hand against me commits murder upon a weaponless man, and will hang accordingly. (*Hush of admiration. Murmurs.*)

Tom. By Gor ! That's fine !

[Enter Thomas Doughty, guarded, with Gregory preceding him. He is received with murmurs of

¹ A short curved sword.

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sympathy. Charles *shakes his hand.* He bears himself haughtily.

Thomas. Silence ! The Court is opened.

Drake (*when all is quiet*). Thomas Doughty, ever since my first acquaintance with you, I have used you as my other self and as my inmost friend. Yet you have still sought to discredit me, thwarting my will, to the great peril of this voyage. You have even (*touching the papers*), in your jealous ambition, aimed at my life. Therefore I have brought you to trial.

Doughty (*lightly*). Why, Lord General, you have no power or commission. [*Assenting murmurs.*]

Drake (*coldly*). I warrant you, my commission is good enough.

Vicary. I protest ! Show your commission ! Show it !

Cries. Hear him ! Show it !

Drake (*turning on him fiercely*). I have nought to do with crafty lawyers. (*Touching the sword*) Here is my commission. Thomas Doughty saw the Queen's Majesty honour me with this sword in my garden, and heard her say : " He which striketh at thee, Drake, striketh at us ! " Hath any man a better commission ? (*Silence.* To Doughty) With a heavy heart I do indict you, Thomas Doughty. You came into this venture with a traitorous intent. You have stolen our common treasure ; you have striven to corrupt my friends ; you tempted some to piracy ; and now you are lying in wait, like a base assassin, to take my life.

Cries. There is no proof ! Bring proof !

Drake (*holding up one of the papers*). Can you deny this writing ? Here, under your own hand, you plan to murder me ! For the rest, Chester—Gregory—have I spoken truth ?

Chester and Gregory. Ay—less than the truth.

Drake. But there is graver matter, even, than my

murder ! High treason against the Sovereign Majesty of the Queen ! (*Commotion.*) Call Edward Bright.

Gregory (calling). Edward Bright !

Bright (thrusting his way through the crowd). Here.

[*Gregory in dumb show puts him to the oath, and makes him kiss the Book.*]

Murmurs. A common sailor ! Shall gentlemen submit to ruffraff ?

Drake. Gentlemen shall submit to the truth. (*To Bright*) Say what thou knowest.

Bright. The night afore us sailed, I heard 'n say this was a maraudin' for piracy an' murder ; and the Court and the Council and Mr. Hatton had been bought to wink at it—yea, and the Queen's Majesty herself !

[*Shock of surprise. Then murmurs increasing to shouts.*]

Cries. What !—The Queen bought !—The Queen a pirate ! He never said it !—'Tis a lie !

[*Uproar.*]

Thomas. Silence !

Drake (to Doughty). What do you answer ?

Doughty. I never said it—or, if I did—I was beside myself with anger. A man knows not what he says——

Drake (sternly). There is more ! There is treason against us all ! (*Curiosity among the crowd.*) My masters, Her Majesty gave me special commandment that of all men Lord Burghley must be kept in ignorance of our true errand, by reason of his fear of Spain. For if he gat wind on't, and we failed, every man here would surely hang.

Vicary (impudently). Lord Burghley never did know !

Drake. Edward Bright, to whom did Thomas Doughty say what you have reported ?

Bright. To my Lord Burghley. [*Sensation.*]

Cries. Lord Burghley !—Then Doughty's a traitor !

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Drake (to *Doughty*). Again—how do you answer?

Doughty. I—I—I refuse to answer.

Drake. You gave him a full plot of the voyage.

[*Doughty remains silent.*]

Drake. And Burghley sent you with us to hinder our enterprise and to report our deeds.

Doughty (at bay). Yes, then ! For he feared your rashness ! [Sensation.]

Drake. His own mouth hath confessed his treachery. (*A short pause. Then with emphasis*) Now, my masters, will your mutinies and discords cease ? What ! Here be we, a little band of Englishmen bent on a great undertaking, the like of which was never seen, and we fling our glory away for jealousies, and our country's honour for personal hate ! Henceforth I will have the gentleman haul with the mariner, and the mariner with the gentleman, and if any refuse, let them sail home ! (*Pause.*) Now, considering my past love for Thomas Doughty, and that I impeach him of aiming at my life, I cannot be his judge. It is for you to say whether he be innocent or guilty. If guilty, his punishment is death. Provost Marshal, lead the accused away. (*Doughty is led away in silence.*) For me, I will await your finding, and abide by it.

[*He goes out to the balcony behind him.*]

Thomas. Make short work on't.

Wynter. He hath confessed treason against the Queen, the Captain-General, his own master—Mr. Hatton—us all, and England, by disclosing our venture to Burghley. He hath been amongst us as Burghley's spy, and now hath betrayed Burghley himself. For me he is guilty and worthy of death.

Thomas. They that in their conscience think Thomas Doughty worthy of death, hold up their right hands.

[*All but Charles, Caube, and Cooke do so.*]

Thomas. To the contrary? (*No one stirs.*) Summon the Captain-General.

[*Tom opens the door of the balcony. Re-enter Drake.*

Charles. Do you condemn him, Vicary?

Vicary (*with a shrug of indifference*). I think of my own head.

Drake. Bring the accused.

[*Thomas Doughty is brought in.*

Drake. Mr. Wynter, how say you? Guilty? Or not guilty?

Wynter. Guilty.

Drake. Thomas Doughty, God knows I desire nothing better than to save your life, if I may with safety to the voyage. Wherefore I give you the choice: will you be set on shore, or will you be conveyed to England, to be tried before the Lords of Her Majesty's Council? If you refuse these, you must suffer death, here, and now.

Doughty. Good Captain, for this I humbly thank you. I will not be left here among the native devils. I will not be sent to England. The shame of the return would be worse than death. I beseech you only to grant me the death of a gentleman.

Drake. This is the heaviest hour of my life. My masters, leave me private with my friend. Master Fletcher, attend us, to make our peace with God.

[*As the officers and men go out, many shake Doughty by the hand.*

Doughty. My good masters all, pray for me, I beseech you.

[*Preceded by Fletcher, he and Drake go out by the Admiral's door. Charles, Caube, Vicary, and Tom Moone remain.*

Charles. Well! God knows what they'll say of this day's work in England!

Vicary. They'll say nought. Neither will we, if you

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trust me. Too many of the great are in this matter, and we should burn our tongues.

Caube. But—his brother—John Doughty?

Vicary. If you love him, bid him hold his peace.

[They go out. Tom remains. Re-enter Drake, Doughty, and Fletcher. The last wrings Doughty's hand and goes up the companion-way weeping.]

Drake (quietly, to Tom). The stirrup-cup.

[Tom fills a great goblet with red wine, and hands it to Doughty.]

Doughty. Francis, I am very near the threshold. God hath witnessed our reconciliation. I pray God to strengthen thy hand for England. (*Takes the cup in both hands.*) And I drink to thee in all love and reverence.

[He drinks, and hands the cup to Drake.]

Drake. I drink to the memory of happy days. I drink to thee—a friend's God-speed.

[He drinks, and hands the cup to Tom, who hurls it through the open port-hole into the sea. Roll of muffled drum on deck. Drake and Doughty clasp hands. Enter, down the companion-way, Gregory, with two guards with drawn swords.]

Doughty (to them). I am ready, friends. (*To Drake.*) Farewell!

[They embrace. Then Doughty goes out erect and smiling. Drake falls on his knees in prayer. Tom stands with his back to Drake, motionless, looking out to sea. Roll of drum.]

CURTAIN

FOR FURTHER READING

Eileen Power, "John of the Golden Hind," in *Boys and Girls of History*.

E. F. Benson, *Sir Francis Drake*.

QUESTIONS

1. When Drake landed at the mouth of the Magellan Straits, he found still standing the gibbet on which Magellan had hanged the leaders of a mutiny. Does the apparent coincidence tell you anything about human nature?

2. Where is the climax of this play?

3. How did Elizabeth reward Drake for making this voyage?

4. Why do you think the stage directions require a roll of drums at the end? Compare *A Room in the Tower*.

For Written Work

5. Compare and contrast Drake's situation with that of Columbus in *The Discovery*.

6. Write an account of Drake's activities from the Spanish point of view.

7. Examine the style of Drake's speeches and account for their impressive quality.

8. What benefits did Elizabeth hope to get from the voyage?

THE FOUR MARYS

By DOMINIC BURKE

CHARACTERS

Mary Queen of Scots.
Mary Carmichael.
Mary Beaton.
Mary Seaton.
A Male Voice (off-stage).

*“ Last night there were four Marys,
To-night there’ll be but three.
There was Mary Seaton and Mary Beaton
And Mary Carmichael and me ! ”*

Old Song.

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[Readers of History know of the stormy, fatal events of Mary Stuart's life. Here the dramatist's imagination has helped him to picture her sad last hours, waiting for death, hoping in vain for a reprieve. The minds of people near to death are supposed to run back over the past, as the wheel comes full circle ; and so Mary recalls the main emotional points of her life right back to her earliest memories. She has reached the end of the road and she stands looking back sadly over the way she has come. There is naturally little of dramatic tension (except for the brief moment when she thinks that the reprieve may have come), for she has lived her life ; its conflicts, triumphs, and disasters are over ; there is nothing left but retrospect : but there is atmosphere and character to keep the play alive on the stage. With good actors, paying great attention to variety of tone and movement, it should be a beautiful play.]

The Scene is laid in a room in Fotheringay Castle. The time is between 2 and 3 A.M., on the morning of Mary Queen of Scot's execution.

The room is dimly lit and sparsely furnished. At one end is a fireplace in which burns a rather wan-looking fire; there is a low stool beside the fireplace. In the centre, but rather nearer to the fire, is a small refectory table. There is a chair at each end and one behind the table facing the audience. At the opposite end near the back of the stage is a curtained door ; between this door and the front of the stage is a prie-dieu surmounted by a crucifix. At the back of the stage, between the end of the centre table and the fireplace, stands a small serving-table on which is a flagon of wine and drinking-cups. The walls are hung with dark draperies. There are two candles on the centre table, and one on the serving-table.

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When the curtain rises, the Queen is seated on the chair at the end of the table nearest to the fire, this chair is turned sideways to the table facing the audience.

Carmichael is on the stool at the Queen's feet leaning against the Queen's knee.

Beaton stands behind the Queen's chair.

Seaton is seated at the table facing the audience.

Mary. How goes the night? I misremember what the watchman called awhile ago.

Mary C. It was two of the clock, sweet Madam.

Mary. Two? (*Pauses.*) The hours take on a solemn measure in their tread toward the dawn.

Mary B. (earnestly). Do not think of it, I beg of you, Madam.

Mary. You have misread my meaning, my fair Beaton. I only do envisage them as tardy guests bidden to a rout.

Mary C. How so, sweet Madam? In my mind the hours turn bleak faces to us now. They are chilled with sorrow to betray us to the pallid dawn.

Mary. I do not see them so. Come now. Surely midnight is like a burly yeoman, ripe in years and full of knowledge. He has a flagon by his side and a strapping serving wench upon his knee.

Mary S. What a strange picture of the wavering hour, that hovers 'twixt dark and dawn!

Mary. Ah! My past midnights have been valiant too betimes, Seaton. I remember— (*Pauses.*) Strange—the conflicting quality of words! How memory helps us to forget!

Mary C. (quickly). Tell us more I beg, sweet Madam. We'll cede you your nocturnal yeoman with his paunch full of Rhenish wine.

Mary (smiling). Thank you, my lovely Mary. Let me see, how shall I depict for you that timid virgin, "ONE"? She is a virgin without a doubt, since none

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have made two with her. She's dark and staid and has a distant mien. Did you not mark her vague farewell as she passed us a short space ago?

Mary C. Madam, I have no wish to note the passing of the hours that carry my life in their train.

[She bows her head.]

Mary (rising). Come now. Let's turn to other matters of more moment. Seaton, look you without, and if there's no reason for dismay, bring here my jewel casket. There is little I have to leave you save my love.

[She sits down helplessly and shivers.]

[Seaton goes towards the door.]

Mary C. You are cold, Madam. Mistress Beaton, see you to the fire while I chafe my Lady's hands.

[She kneels and rubs the Queen's hands, whilst Beaton busies herself with the fire.]

Mary. Nay, child, 'tis nothing! Nothing but this talk of phantom hours. See, I'm restored again! Now, Seaton, the casket, an you please.

[Seaton peers through the door and exits.]

Mary C. Would you take a cup of wine, sweet Madam? To warm your heart and guard against the chill.

Mary. Of what use such precautions in my state?

Mary C. (rising). I'll put it by the fire, to bide in case of need.

[She places a flagon on the hearth.]

Mary. Come. Sit near to me, Mary. Lean against my knee. It gives me back my strength to have you so.

[Carmichael goes and sits at the Queen's feet, and leans against her knee. Seaton enters, carrying a gilded casket which she places in front of the Queen.]

Mary. Is all still outside?

Mary S. Yes, Madam. The guard sleeps on his stool, snoring like the swine from whence he came!

Mary. Is it our portly friend with the flaming beard?

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Mary S. The same, Madam.

Mary. Truly, he does suggest a pig shorn of his bristles, such as one sees hanging head down at the flesher's door ! Dead pigs have an expression of smug complacency on their faces ; their little eyes are cunningly wrought into their fat !

Mary S. (shuddering). I would that this man were trussed up by the heels ! (*Pauses.*) Oh, Madam. If there were some way to flee ! If we could leave him to his brutish dreams and creep to freedom in the dark without !

Mary. Of what avail to try, dear Seaton ? My cousin of England has drawn too close a mesh about me. I have no mind to taste of freedom for a month, a day maybe ; and then to wait for death like a limed linnet in a wicker cage ! Believe me, I'm over weary of flight. Besides, my soul would fain be done with prisons. It craves to mount up through the dawn bidding farewell forever to grey fear.

Mary C. If we could bear you company, I'd be content. I dread that you should face the dark alone before the light.

Mary. My good kind Marys, you've been my friends. Surely without you three the fine sun would seem a poor thing, lacking in warmth veiled by your absence. And my spirit, far from finding freedom, would be constrained to go in quest of yours. Fear not, but that I'll draw you to myself some day, through your sweet thought and my love for you. (*Smiles, and lays her hand on Carmichael's head.*) And now, come close, my ladies, I pray you, while like Pandora I unlock the casket ! My keys, Mary.

Mary C. (drawing the key from her pocket). Here, sweet Madam.

[*Beaton stands behind the Queen's chair. Seaton takes the chair c. of the table, facing the audience.*]

Mary. When did I last open this, I wonder ?

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Mary S. Was it not at Tutbury¹ in the summer, fair Madam?

Mary. Yes, so it was, at Tutbury. 'Twas there I sold the ruby from my mother's ring to pay our debts. How long ago it seems and wrapped in mist!

Mary C. Show us your treasures, Madam; let us escape awhile into a happier past.

Mary (*holding up a heart carved in ivory*). Here is the first of all my fairings. An ivory heart on which I eased my gums while still an infant; my mother had it when she was a girl. See! The arms of Guise² are graven on it, and her small cipher.

[*She hands it to Carmichael who strokes it tenderly with her forefinger.*]

Mary C. I feel the scratches of your baby teeth, Madam, on the smooth surface.

Mary. Keep it, my Mary. Let it lie close to your own warm heart in thought of me.

Mary C. (*striving not to weep*). Madam, if only I could give that heart to serve your cause!

[*She takes the Queen's hand and kisses it slowly.*]

Mary B. (*breaking in*). Do you recall ought of the castle of Linlithgow where you first saw the light of day, Madam?

Mary. Nay, 'tis but a shadowy place to me. Stay though! One room stands clear from out the fog of years. In it my mother sewed, her broideries stretched on oaken frames. Her wheel stood waiting for her touch in a recess near to the casement, where the bold sun did penetrate those mighty walls. A portrait of my father James hung over the hearth, facing the light. My women took me there to look on it before I went to France.

Mary S. Your youthful days were lightsome in fair France, dear Madam?

¹ She was imprisoned there, 1585-1586.

² Noble family of France. Her mother was Mary of Guise.

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Mary. I liked it well. The Royal children bore me company who had been much alone. 'Twas gay and easy living in their midst.

Mary B. And the Dauphin? ¹ 'Tis said he loved you from the first, when you were small and showed a head of sunny curls.

Mary C. (warmly). Who can wonder if the Dauphin loved our Lady. Loving the child, perforce he loved the woman; as men who love the woman love the child she ever is.

Mary. Our two short years were wondrous happy. Well I remember after the long ceremony of our nuptials returning to unrobe in my quiet room. There, Francis came to seek me, and falling on his knees, he kissed my hands, vowing that I should know no care if life were given to him. See! (*She takes a string of pearls from the casket.*) He drew this necklet of small pearls from out his bosom and clasped them round my neck, spanning it with his hands thus—(*she clasps her throat, smiling reminiscently*). "Your throat is small, my love," Francis said. "Look! What a fragile stem it is to hold the flower above it!" Then he touched my lips with his. (*She puts her hands round her neck, and panic springs to her eyes.*) My throat! My throat! Carmichael, tell me it will be quick! I dread the steel upon my flesh.

Mary C. Hush! Madam, I beseech you, lest we fail to meet our foemen as we would.

Mary (recovering herself). True, Mary! My cousin must never know I feared the steel. See, pretty Beaton. Will you wear these pearls for me? Each one a thought holding my love for you.

Mary B. (rises and then kneels beside the Queen, who clasps the pearls around her neck; she takes the Queen's

¹ She was married to him in 1558, but he died in 1560 and she returned to Scotland.

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hand and kisses it.) I have no words to say, Madam. I dare not trust my voice.

[The Queen strokes her head. Beaton rises, shielding her eyes with her arm, and stands gazing into the fire.]

Mary. Grieve not, my child. *(She takes another trinket from the casket and holds it up.)* Look you ! This cross of golden filigree. It came from far-off Florence, where the goldsmiths work so cunningly, lifting their eyes the while to watch the turgid Arno flow between its yellow banks. Rizzio¹ gave me this sweet keepsake on that first day of March, a week before he was so foully murdered. It seemed so strange to find his gift survive when his soft voice was muted, and his lute cast away. You knew him, Seaton. Take this cross in memory of us both. My poor friend and me.

Mary S. God grant him peace and you, beloved mistress. I'll take this symbol of Christ's suffering from your hands, and pray His mercy on you all my days.

[She walks away, her back to the audience, striving for composure, and then returns to her place beside the Queen's chair.]

Mary. There's naught left in my box save one rare gift. Ah, that's for Mary, for myself alone. 'Tis from my Lord Bothwell,² lover and husband for so short a space. But what a man ! What power was his, and yet what tenderness ! Never did I conceive so fine a weave of mastery and pity. And my heart was the centre of his banner, the emblem that it bore ! When it was rudely torn from out his keeping, it left his standard rent and stained and tattered. Its glory

¹ Mary's Italian secretary and favourite. When he supplanted her husband, Darnley, in her counsels the latter joined the conspirators, who murdered him in 1566.

² Organiser of the murder of Darnley in 1567, after which he married Mary. She was eventually obliged to separate from him, but she refused to agree to a divorce.

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ended, its brave colours sullied by foul hands that were not fit to touch our happiness.

Mary B. (bitterly). Oh, Madam, Madam ! Why have your years been spent in clash of arms and sorry strife ?

Mary. When I was yet a child they named me "Honey Pot," and prophesied that bees would cluster round me. Maybe they did ! (*With bitterness*) But there were drones and wasps and vile flies from off the midden who came in clouds. Their venom spread throughout my veins, turning my joy to sadness, my fair youth into a sickly thing. They lit upon my friends and relatives with their sharp stings and aspid poison, spreading disease throughout the countryside.

Mary C. Yet there be a few who stand unscathed by such a concourse, safe in their love for you, my Lady, for love is the sure antidote against all ills.

Mary B. How many have there been who've cherished you, and who in exile and in death have breathed the name of Mary, smiling at the rare beauty that it conjured up before their eyes ?

Mary. Many 'tis true have loved and died for me, but seems it an unreasonable wish I held ! I wanted one to love and live for me.

Mary S. And such there was in my Lord Bothwell.

Mary. Yea, such there was. (*Pauses.*) Yet, here am I alone, with but a letter earnest of the same. I've hidden it throughout the stormy years, reading it when the reading was a form, so well my heart could scan his lines alone.

[*She takes a letter from the casket and holds it to her heart.*]

Mary C. Dear Madam, shall we leave you for a while, to live again its contents ?

Mary. No, do not leave me. I would only place this token of our love with its brave words over my

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faltering heart, and wear it as a talisman of light when my eyes fail.

Mary B. (alarmed). But, Madam, leave not this your secret to be defiled by those who love you not.

Mary (absently). What matters it, once I am gone? I only seek its comfort in this hour.

Mary C. He would not grudge it thus.

Mary. Nay, well would he understand. He never could destroy one line my hand had penned him.

Mary B. I like it not. The years can change the meaning of a phrase, without the knowledge of the rhythm that made it. I'd leave no legacy of words to form a base for thesis and discussion in the future.

Mary S. 'Tis true. Men do delight in rifling the past to their own ends. I would not have yon letter bruited wide, sharing its sense with soldiers on the march, with courtiers bowing round the English Queen. The thoughts it holds leapt out to greet your own, untrammelled by the fear of other eyes. (*Pleadingly*) Entrust it then to one of us, and we will keep it safe!

Mary. What think you, Carmichael?

Mary C. I would not keep it, my sweet Lady. Put it yourself among the embers of the dying fire. For love can have no fitter requiem than to consume itself in clear swift burning flame.

Mary. Such was our love, his and mine. (*Pauses.*) You're right, Carmichael. Help me to rise, and let his words spring free into the night. (*She rises, takes the letter and unfolds it, pressing it to her lips.*) There must not be one thing to bear me company, my love, for soon I can protect myself no more. Farewell. (*She kneels and puts the letter in the fire.*) Soon shall my soul be piercing the night, like this swift flame.

[*She rises and sways; Carmichael supports her to her chair.*]

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Mary C. Mistress Beaton, the wine ! Quick, for her pulses flag. [Beaton *fetches the flagon.*

Mary (*slowly*). That must not be. Give me the cup, I would not falter when my hour is come.

[*She drinks.*

[*A shout is heard off, a trampling of feet and clash of arms.*

Mary S. Oh, God ! What is afoot ?

Beaton (*excitedly, clutching Mary's hand*). Madam, the reprieve ! Can it be ? Hasten, Mistress Carmichael, see you why they stir.

[*Carmichael hurries to the door and exits.*

Mary (*sitting bolt upright with hope in her eyes*). The reprieve ! Can it be so ?

[*She gazes at Beaton a moment, who is holding her hand.*

Mary B. Courage, dear Madam.

Mary (*sinks suddenly back into her chair, and holds her hand to her head*). Courage ! I think maybe it takes more courage to live again, to face the living death I've known so long ! Nay, Beaton, raise not your hopes, the chances are so slight. I'm tired, so tired of fear and all its ways ; surely it now must end ?

Mary C. (*enters holding her side, she walks unsteadily, sinks down into the chair, and buries her head in her arm ; after a moment she lifts her head and says dully*). 'Twas the guard. They're lining up outside along the stairway.

[*Seaton and Beaton remain motionless with sunken heads.*

Mary S. (*raising her head*). Did you speak with them ?

Mary C. I have no word to say to men like those.

Mary. 'Tis not their fault. They only do the bidding of the English Queen, my poor Carmichael.

Mary B. (*savagely*). May she be cursed forever for her villainy ! May this her baseness blacken her last

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hour, and the earth spew up her body in the end, finding it all too vile to mingle with the soil !

Mary. Rather, wish her to wed a consort like herself, my Beaton. One who's as full of jealousy and lust for power as she, so they may clash by day and sulk by night. (*Bitterly*) Oh, I could laugh to hear that shrewish tongue gird at her spouse, and drive him to seek his pleasures in some softer place.

Mary S. Madam, I'd see her married to the Lord of Hell, if 'twere in my power to make it so.

Mary. Fear not, dear Seaton. Even mortal men can make of marriage a fair counterpart of his domain, I warrant you.

Mary S. My gentle Madam ; if we do meet again in some kind Paradise, such as they tell us of in pious books, think you 'twill be allowed to us to bring you news, should that news be unkind ?

Mary (smiling). Seaton, I see you mounting to high Heaven with tidings of Elizabeth's misfortunes ripe for my ear. How she was married with her wig awry, and how her lord did slight her at the Court. My loyal Seaton, I wonder if we still shall burn with memories of our fall at her cruel hands ? I doubt it, once we're freed to better things.

Mary C. (teasingly). 'Twill not be paradise for Mistress Seaton unless she prattles sometime of the past !

Mary S. (tossing her head). Nay, I can keep as close a mouth as any if there is need ; is it not so, Madam ?

Mary. I know it well ! Yet have I loved to hear that nimble tongue run on, since our sad wanderings began. Sometimes in sunny weather out beneath the trees, or gathered round the fire when the nights were chill. You've made me laugh, when there was little reason for my mirth.

Mary B. Do you recall that night at Holyrood in the long room, when we were practising a contra-

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dance ; and Master Rizzio played us a merry tune ? When suddenly the door flung wide, and Doctor Knox was on us in a trice ! “ What do you here, Ladies ? ” he said with frowning face, and we stood mum-chance knowing not what to answer !

Mary C. (breaking in). Then Mistress Seaton curtsied with a pretty air, replying—“ ’Tis little that we do save pine for your brave presence, sir ! ”

[*They laugh.*]

Mary S. Yes, and first I vow that he was well pleased ! ’Twas when he had reminded himself of duty, he called me a bold hussy, and told me to begone.

Mary B. Think you, that you brought a warm glint to his frosty eyes, Mistress ?

Mary S. ’Tis like enough ! (*She tosses her head.*) Perchance he spent the night in prayer, in deep remorse ; wrestling anew for his sad soul and ours !

Mary. Poor dreary man ! He had not the wit to see the God that he created was like himself, a Lowland Scot !

Mary C. That is not just, sweet Madam, pray forgive me ! But ’tis said that Knox¹ was soured whilst serving sentence in the French King’s galleys. Before that time he was a likely man enough, but over sensitive for conscience’ sake.

Mary. Carmichael, you have nought but kindness towards all God’s creatures. Well do I love that spacious mind, where your thoughts lie quiet as in a sunken pool, all untroubled by surface storms and ripples.

Mary C. I once did try to keep an even bent against the petty dealings of such men as clustered round your person, gentle Madam.

Mary. And now ? Have you so changed ? Is

¹ John Knox (1513–1572), Protestant leader in Scotland. He did serve in the French galleys as a prisoner in 1547–1549.

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there no more that just and friendly mien to all around you ?

Mary C. Not now. I've grown too wise in worldly matters to look on justice as a human trait ! Meseems, dear Madam, 'tis not if deeds are right or wrong, but how one loves or hates the doer, that decides the issue in the mind. That or one's own advancement, so think I now.

Mary B. 'Tis strange to hear such words from you, Mistress Carmichael.

Mary C. Not stranger than the flux within me, I can assure you.

Mary S. (hastily taking a comfit box from her pocket). A comfit ! Take one, dear Madam, I pray you ; that I may offer something sweet to your Carmichael, to take the taste of bitterness from out her mouth ! It savours strangely there.

[Mary smiles and takes a sweet ; Seaton then hands them to the others.]

Mary (sighing). Dear life ! 'Tis like a score of years since we settled here to bide the dawn ! I feel as if I waited on a chaise, coming to fetch me on a mournful journey. Yet now my mind is free from thought of all that does attend on such a flitting. See, I have no need of money or of clothes. Yet both have well tormented me at other times. You have my cloak, Carmichael ?

Mary C. Yes, dear Madam.

Mary (looking at them in turn). Your eyes seek my face in furtive glances, fearing to meet my own and surprise the fear that lies in them.

Mary S. There is no fear in your fine eyes, dear Madam. Only the hooded shadow of suspense, and little wonder.

Mary. We cannot even turn the cards, for I've no fortune. No future left. Beaton, how often have you wiled away our waiting with talk of dark men, of

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surprises, journeys, and the like? We snatched at happiness, and often gleaned it too.

Mary B. Madam, I beg you, have a care for our poor hearts so near to breaking! There's no fortune left to us, since you must go; no hope of respite from our memories, for you have been our life and all its gladness. *[She weeps.]*

Mary (rising and drawing Beaton to her arms). Would you make Mary cry? *(Beaton shakes her head and then lowers it on to the Queen's shoulder.)* Then dry your eyes! Come! Is it not fitting that I lead the way? Have I not always passed the portal first? Before any of you. *[Beaton raises her head and smiles wanly.]*

Mary C. Madam, I have here a book of verse; with your permission I will read to soothe our sore tried spirits. Let us take place. The author is well skilled in rhyming and sweet song.

Mary. As you will, Carmichael! Your voice is full of warm candour like the autumn countryside. Read to us, I pray.

[They settle themselves and Carmichael opens the book and reads.]

Mary C. (reading):

“ My Lady, in the woods this day I found
Beneath the pallid sun, a mist of blue
Wild hyacinths be-sprinkled o'er the ground,
Their starry faces shining through the dew.

“ And every bell chimed soft thine own dear name,
Its fragrance hung up on the still Spring air.
I doubt that love could have a sweeter fame.
I doubted once that love could be so fair.

“ So lingering pensive in that leafless glade,
I seemed to see thee glide across the sward;
Thine head downcast; thy silent lovely shade
Turned. And one gentle smile was my reward.”

THE FOUR MARYS

[They sit silent a moment ; Mary is obviously exhausted.]

Mary. A pretty, hapless song, Carmichael ; which has no counterpart in real life.

Mary C. So you deny the fantasies of love, fair Madam ? You, who have inspired so many poets.

Mary. I think that I do, Carmichael,—yet—

[A sharp knock is heard on the door. They all start.]

Male Voice (off). I seek Mary Stuart, erstwhile Queen of Scots !

Mary S. Oh, Lady ! What have we now ?

Mary B. Bar the door, Mistress Carmichael ! Let them not enter !

Mary (rising). Be silent, ladies ! *(She walks towards the door and calls)* Sir, what do you require of me ?

Male Voice. The Governor of Fotheringay waits below to witness the execution of Mary Stuart, by order of Her Majesty Elizabeth of England.

[The ladies gather round the Queen ; Carmichael holds her hand, kneeling beside her.]

Mary. I shall be ready in a short space, sir. Acquaint the Governor of my obedience. I have some matters that detain me for a brief moment.

Male Voice. Tarry not long, Lady, 'tis bitter cold for those who wait below in the courtyard.

[Steps are heard receding.]

Mary *(turns to the prie-dieu and stands erect)*. So, it has come at last ! That moment we all wait for from our birth. *(She kneels, her Ladies a few paces behind her ; she prays silently with her eyes fixed on the crucifix ; her hands are crossed on her breast. Carmichael sobs audibly. After a moment Mary rises and faces them.)* Carmichael, unpin you my ruff and give me now the kerchief, lest they bind my eyes.

[She stoops and Carmichael unpins her ruff, which she clasps to her heart.]

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Mary S. Give us your blessing, Madam, e'er you leave us.

Mary. I bless you all and love you to the end.

Mary C. (tearfully kissing the Queen's hand). 'Tis worse than death to see you so, my Lady. Ah God ! That such a fate should overtake one who deserves it not.

Mary. I am already gone, gone from this room in spirit. Seek not to hold me back with tender words so that I die anew.

Mary B. Pity your women, left when you have fled towards the light, dear Madam.

Mary (dreamily). My feet are on that silver moonlit road between dim banks leading to the horizon. They skim the surface like enchanted things, hurrying me to that black line afar, from whence I shall ne'er return.

Mary B. (sobbing). I cannot let you go.

[She clutches Mary's dress and half falls forward to her knees.]

Mary (raising her up). Unhand me now, dear Beaton. Carmichael, bear her up and succour her, for she is weak with fear. Farewell, my Ladies ! Grudge me not, I pray you, the benediction of deep dreamless sleep. *[She goes towards the door.]*

Mary C. (in despair). Madam !

Mary (turning). My Marys ! *(She calls)* I am ready now, sir. I trust that I have not caused you to tarry overlong upon your errand !

CURTAIN

THE FOUR MARYS

FOR FURTHER READING

Dorothy Una Ratcliffe, "Mary of Scotland in Wensleydale," in *Modern Short Plays*, 3rd series (London Univ. Press).
John Drinkwater, *Mary Stuart* (full-length play).
Maurice Hewlett, *The Queen's Quair* (novel).
White Melville, *The Queen's Maries* (novel).

QUESTIONS

1. "I'd leave no legacy of words to form a base for thesis and discussion in the future" (Beaton). Such a "legacy" was found. What was it? Do you think it was genuine?
2. "He had not the wit to see that the God he created was like himself—a Lowland Scot" (Mary Stuart).
 - (a) Find out what was Knox's idea of God and why he served in the French galleys.
 - (b) Why was Mary antagonistic to his idea of God?
 - (c) Why does she refer disparagingly to a "Lowland Scot"?
3. What does the jewel-casket embody for Mary?

For Written Work

4. "Oh Madam, Madam! Why have your years been spent in clash of arms and horrid strife?" Why had they? Give an outline of the strife.
5. "I'd see her married to the Lord of Hell, if 'twere in my power to make it so." What do you know of Elizabeth's own marriage schemes?
6. Write a short scene depicting the occasion when Knox came upon the ladies dancing to Rizzio's music.
7. Why is this play pathetic rather than tragic?

WOMEN AT WAR

A Play in One Act

By EDWARD PERCY

CHARACTERS

Lady (Althea) Shoales.

Nan Shoales.

Mistress Neve.

Mistress Barebegod.

Dame Ursula Clibbutt.

Mistress Drood.

Philadelphia Witchett.

WOMEN AT WAR

[This play does not deal with a historical incident nor with actual people. It is included in this book because it brings the Civil War home to the reader from an unusual point of view—that of the women of both sides. It also gives a good sense of period.

The author writes : “ I had no real characters in mind when writing *Women at War* ; though the attitude of that part of England—the Kentish marshes—is, I think, accurately represented. Contemporary records show the people to have been very ‘ mixed ’ in their loyalties ; and there is no doubt that the smugglers did a roaring trade with both sides. ‘ Neve ’ is a very common Kentish name. The only real local person mentioned in the play is the Vicar, at the time, of Stone, a neighbouring village, Mr. Marten. But the suggestion that he preached a ‘ trimming ’ sermon can only be excused on the ground that one cannot libel the dead ! ”]

The Scene is the oak-beamed parlour of my Lady Shoales’ House in the village of Appledore in Kent, on June 17, 1645.

You see an oak-beamed parlour whose long, low window overlooks a bright garden. There are doors to R. and L. The furniture is handsome and all of oak. On the central table is a pile of white linen and clean rags. Nan Shoales, a pretty girl of the better class of the period, enters up L. with a bunch of roses. She puts them on table C., goes to R. and picks up a small earthenware jug from dresser. She goes out, returning in a moment with it filled with water. She begins to arrange the roses which she sets, when done, on the table.

Philadelphia enters R. with an armful of old, clean sheets which she lays down on the table with the other linen. She is a young serving-woman, buxom and outspoken, very down-right.

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Philadelphia (*above R. of table*). Here's a bundle of old sheets from Mistress Drood. They're in holes—most of 'em. But they'll do, I daresay. And I hope to God the holier parts goes to the King.

Nan (*above L. of table*). Philadelphia !

Philadelphia. Oh, I know in *this* house one has to bottle oneself up till one be like a toad blowed out with air. But I must e'en vent a little now and then for safety's sake.

Nan. Well, don't let my mother hear you. That's all.

Philadelphia (*folding up sheets and counting them*). 'Tis fair contrary in my lady to be so out of it all. Why can't she take sides like the good Englishwoman she is ? Fight it out and shame the Devil, say I ! And if there be bloody noses and bloody polls—well, it adds a bit o' zest to life, anyway. I ben't afeared of fisticuffs—not I !—and culverins and mortars and mines be on'y fisticuffs on a grand scale. I'd as lief my man wore a breastplate as a jerkin—for all that they're awkward fashions to court in—as my poor ribs knows !

Nan. There's no sense in this civil war. If 'twas the French or the Spaniards 'twould be a horse of another colour—but to fight your own countrymen, your own neighbours, your friends—brother against brother it is, in some parts—for the sake of a silly proud king or an upstart farmer like Master Cromwell—why, it's crazy !

Philadelphia. General Cromwell, if you please, miss.

Nan (*putting jug of roses on table L.*). Master is all he'll get from me, Philadelphia. Master Cromwell and Master Charles. We'll bring 'em both down to earth. (*Moving back to L. of table C.*) For three years we've seen trade die, honest work wither and the only flourishing industry in the country the making of widows and orphans ! Can you wonder that sane people like my mother won't be in either camp ?

WOMEN AT WAR

Philadelphia (a little abashed). Oh, I know it's my lady's goodness of heart persuades her to it. But it's very un-English in her to be out of a fight.

Nan. Pray God the whole business finish soon. They say the King's men are due to meet the Parliament's army in Northamptonshire any day now.

[*The rattle of drums is heard as a regiment passes down the country roads.*]

Philadelphia. Aye, and there's some Appledore lads there—on both sides, too. I'll lay they lam each other.

[*Nan sits L. of table.*]

Why, there's Philip Neve for one in the King's forces—more fool he!—and Hallelujah Barebegod from the heath that carries a pike for Oliver. I'll warrant Mistress Neve and Joan Barebegod will be at each other's throats this afternoon—like *her* son and *her* husband up North. I think your mother takes a great risk asking 'em to meet.

Nan. My mother's one idea is to get all folk together in kindly peaceable work that's for the good of both sides. Is it her fault the men have all gone mad?

Philadelphia. Mad, quotha!

[*She puts the chair R. of table nearer to the table.*]

Nan. Yes, downright mad. What's all this pother about tonnage, poundage, ship-money¹ and the like, the rights of Parliament and the people or the rights of kings? (*After a moment, wistfully, rising and going to the window.*) What is it to a quiet life among the sheep and the streams and the giant skies, to the light on the marshes in the morning or the light on the hills in the evening? Nothing but a great noise and roaring.

[*To above table again.*]

Philadelphia (excited). But for them as *don't* like a quiet life there's a lot to be said for it. Troops passing, and cannons and horses to and fro, and stout

¹ Three taxes over which there were disputes between Charles and Parliament.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

lads marching—aye, and one's heart marching alongside 'em, bless 'em ! And then the news ! I'm all a-tiptoe when the posts come in.

[*Lady Shoales enters L. She is a dignified woman, masterful in a quiet way but with a strong sense of humour as well as sympathy. She is richly but not gaily dressed. She carries several pieces of peeled wood cut into short lengths.*

Lady Shoales (above L. of table). Martin has cut me these staves. They're the very thing the regimental surgeons are wanting to mend broken bones. I think they should be padded and stitched over with linen—so—though they say that's not necessary. Oh, these apothecaries !

Nan (holding up the torn sheets). Look at these sheets Mistress Drood has sent up !

Lady Shoales. I think I'd speak of them reverently, Nan, as one does of the dead. Still, they'll come in, I daresay. Joan Barebegod has given me three nearly new napkins.

Nan. She is coming, then ?

Lady Shoales. Oh, she's coming. She said that, as I'd asked her in God's name, she'd come for His sake, if not for mine.

Philadelphia (crossing L.). Did she—the Devil take her !

Lady Shoales. Philadelphia——!

Philadelphia. Does she think she's the only person on speaking terms with the A'mighty ? I'm inclined to the Parliament boys myself, but I can't stomach such cant !

[*Throughout this scene Philadelphia is busy with the linen.*

Nan. Does she know Mistress Neve will be here again ?

Lady Shoales (smiling). She knows very well.

Nan (coming and kissing Lady Shoales). I think my

WOMEN AT WAR

mother's a miracle of tact. I don't know how you contrived it. They're sworn enemies since the last sewing.

Lady Shoales. I'm a baronet's widow, don't forget, Nan. When *you* are, you'll find plenty of unlikely people ready to come to *your* house. As to their being sworn enemies, that's all the more reason why they should meet occasionally—poor souls ! Besides, Joan knows that, if she doesn't come, Mistress Neve and *her* party will be getting ahead with the King's bandages, and the Parliament will be nowhere in Appledore ! (*A knock is heard.*) Who's that ?

Nan (*peering from the window*). Old Dame Clibbutt, Mother.

Lady Shoales. Quick, Philadelphia ! And let us have out the malmsey and the comfits. And you may bring in your own sewing, if you like.

Philadelphia (*with a rapid curtsy*). Thank you, my lady. [*She goes out L.*]

Nan. Now we shall hear of all the doings in the marshes in the old Queen's day, and how she once danced with Sir Walter Raleigh !

Lady Shoales. Yes, she's outstayed the Golden Age—like a December pippin.

Philadelphia (*re-entering L.*). Mistress Clibbutt—if it please your ladyship.

[*Dame Clibbutt enters L. She is an old woman, nearly eighty, but almost gaudily dressed and exceedingly sprightly for her years. She carries a black crook-handled stick and a fur muff. Her costume is more James the First than Charles the First. Philadelphia withdraws R.*]

Lady Shoales (*taking her hands*). Well, my dear lady, and how do you keep ?

The Dame. Badly, my dear, like a poor conserve. I'm a handful of dry bones held together by my stomacher.

Nan. Come and sit you down, Dame Ursula.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

The Dame. Still at your good works, I see. (*Poking at linen with her stick.*) I tell you frankly I haven't come to sew. No, no, I'm much too blind. I've come to talk. To talk and to laugh—if there's a laugh left in England to-day.

[*Sits in armchair R. of front.*]

Lady Shoales (significantly). If——!

The Dame. The country's going helter-skelter to the dogs. Things are very different to what they were in the dear Queen's time. The plain truth is, England does better when there's a petticoat on the throne.

[*Nan smiles and brings footstool and sits close to Dame Clibbutt.*]

Lady Shoales. I wonder if that's true.

The Dame. Ay, it is ; for a good king must be a coward at heart, and women are clever cowards, whereas men are brave as lions and haven't a scruple of brain between a dozen of 'em. Look at these King and Parliament affrays ! We've had four years of it. Turning the country topsy-turvy for a parcel of whimsy notions ! The King's a fool and slippery as an eel—as any grandson of Mary Darnley's ¹ must be !—and t'others are crop-eared knaves. Queen Bess 'ud have knocked their heads together. Ay, or else have knocked 'em clean off !

[*Philadelphia enters R. with a tray on which are wine-glasses, some wine and a dish of comfits, which she puts on table in front of Lady Shoales.*]

Nan. Heads may fall yet, Dame, before the business is over.

The Dame. Well, a head sans brain is no great loss, child.

Philadelphia (flaring). No, not if it be a King's !

The Dame (dryly). Nor a goose's belike, child.

Lady Shoales. Philadelphia !

¹ Mary Queen of Scots married Darnley. James I was their son.

WOMEN AT WAR

Philadelphia (with one of her quick bobs). Your pardon, my lady.

[*She goes out R.* Nan is sitting on a stool at The Dame's feet. Lady Shoales is behind the table cutting out bandages.

Lady Shoales. The pity is some of them didn't fall before the business was begun.

The Dame. Better an old head on the block than a young body lying in a field. (*With a laugh.*) If this goes on, I'm like to lose the last of my lovers! And as for Nan—why, my dear, it may mean eternal spinsterhood. A very ugly combination of words—as your Devonshire parson knows: he whose song you gave us last week—about plucking roses.

Nan (*looking up with a smile*). Master Robert Herrick? ¹

The Dame. That's the man. Though I fancy his eye's a touch too roguish for his cloth. I hope he'll publish his verses one day. How does it go?

Nan (*singing*):

“Gather ye rose-buds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying:
And this same flower that smiles to-day,
To-morrow will be dying.”

[*Philadelphia enters R. with a large wickerwork basket.*

Philadelphia. Here's the Parliament basket, my lady. And Mistress Neve's coming up the path.

Lady Shoales. Put it down by Mistress Barebegod's chair, *Philadelphia*.

[*She does so, above R. end of table, and goes out L.*

Nan. “Then be not coy, but use your time:

And while ye may, go marry:

For having lost but once your prime,

You may for ever tarry.”

¹ 1591–1674. Poet, and Vicar of Dean Prior, Devon, until he lost the living in 1647, probably because of his Royalist sympathies.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

The Dame. "For ever tarry . . ." A pretty song for women to sing with all the men at war. I remember Sir Walter Raleigh saying to me when we danced together at New Romney after the brotherhood and Guestling¹—Oh, in 'eighty-five it must have been; I was a chit of a girl then——

Philadelphia (re-entering). Mistress Neve—if it please your ladyship.

[*Mrs. Neve enters L., a thin stately woman, simply but royally dressed: an obvious King's woman. Philadelphia goes out R. Lady Shoales rises and kisses Mrs. Neve. Nan Shoales rises and curtsies.*

Lady Shoales. Welcome, Kate.

Mrs. Neve. Thanks, Althea. I find welcomes rarer to-day than they were a year ago—before the King's luck 'gan to wane. To-day all I get is a bellyful of black looks. Even my own men frown at me as if I'd the Evil Eye.

Lady Shoales. Do they? At you? "Lord, what fools these mortals be!"²

Mrs. Neve. Oh, every dog has his day to-day. Last night as we sat at supper, a great stone came flying through the open lattice on to the table.

Lady Shoales. A stone?

The Dame (interestedly). Stone-throwing, eh?

Mrs. Neve. It smashed the blue bowl of Venice glass that my brother gave me. Lucy was cut on the lip by a splinter. The poor child bled for an hour.

The Dame. Od's bodikins! Did ye have the rogues whipped and stocked, eh?

Mrs. Neve. 'Twas too dark to see who threw it. Roger ran out but he found no one. That's what we may all expect if these horrible Ironsides have the best of it.

¹ A very ancient ceremony still held in the Cinque Ports.

² Shakespeare, *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, II. i. 115.

WOMEN AT WAR

The Dame. I thought the marshes inclined to the King, though the Parliament's fleet holds the Channel, and they *do* say that, if His Majesty wants to receive a *very* particular message from abroad, it has to go through the smugglers at Rye in a barrel of brandy!

Mrs. Neve (bitterly). There's a loyalty that lasts just so long as the weather's fine. When the east wind blows . . . Did you hear the Vicar of Stone in Appledore Church on Sunday? Oh, Master Marten's a trimmer! He means to be safe in either event. A year ago he was King's man to the backbone.

[*Philadelphia enters R. with the second basket.*]

Philadelphia. If it please your ladyship—the King's basket.

Lady Shoales. Set it by Mistress Neve, Philadelphia, and thank you.

[*Philadelphia obeys and goes out L.*]

Mrs. Neve (sitting in chair above L. of table). Which do we make to-day, Althea—bandages or slings?

Lady Shoales. Whichever you please.

[*Sits c. above table.*]

Mrs. Neve. I think bandages are the more generally useful. I shall go on with them. (*Her eye catches sight of the first basket.*) Does that mean the Roundhead woman will be here again?

Lady Shoales. It does.

Mrs. Neve. Really, Althea, I think you carry your impartiality too far.

Lady Shoales. But, Kate, aren't the Parliament's men men too? Can't *they* suffer? We womenfolk must do our sewing, as it were, under a flag of truce. I don't ask you to make for them. And those of us, like myself, who profess nothing, will divide what we make between you. Can you ask fairer of me than that? Let's get away, for half an hour, from both King and Parliament—and study what we have in common.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Mrs. Neve (with indignation). What have I in common with Joan Barebegod?

Lady Shoales (quietly). Humanity.

[*There is a short pause while they continue sewing.*
Have you good news of Philip?

Mrs. Neve. I had a letter come yesterday. There was a post through from Leicester. I have it with me, and I'll read it to you when I've worked a spell.

Lady Shoales. Is he well?

Mrs. Neve. He is. Our last batch of linen reached them safely. He sends the surgeon's thanks and says they cry out for more. It is those things they most need—linen and drugs. The townsfolk and villagers are very good in the places they pass through, but everywhere linen is scarce. Some housewives have given all their bedding. Others have hidden theirs with their plate.

Nan. I think I'd rather sleep between sacking than have sick men at my door without the wherewithal to ease them.

The Dame. Specially if they was gallant young captains with kiss-curls!

[*Philadelphia enters L.*

Philadelphia. If it please your ladyship—Mistress Barebegod's come.

[*Joan Barebegod enters. She is a fine-looking woman of about thirty, very plainly and severely dressed. Her manner is prim and formal, but she is hearty enough beneath it. Philadelphia shuts door and remains L.*

Joan. I fear I'm late, but, as God would have it, the bees swarmed.

[*Nan and Lady Shoales rise to greet her. The others remain seated. Mrs. Neve averts her face.*

Lady Shoales. Oh, the afternoon's young yet! I hope you took them.

Joan. We did. (*She goes to above R. of table.*) The

WOMEN AT WAR

Lord sent us a mighty swarm. Eli was sharply stung about the head. He does not take tribulation in the right spirit. Is it bandages to-day, friend?

Lady Shoales. As you like. Mistress Neve is making bandages. And here is a pair of splints to begin your basket. And a pair for you, too, Kate.

Mrs. Neve. Thank you, Althea.

Joan. The Parliament thanks thee, friend. (*Glancing at Mrs. Neve.*) I have a prompting within me to make slings. [*Sits chair above R. of table.*]

Philadelphia. Will it be meet for me to fetch my needle and my little bit o' sewing now, my lady?

Lady Shoales. Why, yes, child. Mistress Drood is not come, but we shall hear her if she does.

Philadelphia (bobbing). Thank you, my lady.

[*She goes out R.*]

Lady Shoales. Have you heard from your husband lately, Mistress Barebegod?

Joan. Not these three weeks. Hallelujah is a poor correspondent; but, when he does write, there's a ring to his letters like the Psalms of David.

The Dame. Now, if I married again, I should choose a husband who could write like the Song of Solomon.

Lady Shoales (laughing). Dame!

The Dame. "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair . . ." No one will ever say that to me now. But fifty years ago it wouldn't have been an overstatement.

Joan. Methinks it ill becomes an old woman—a very old woman—to speak lightly of Holy Writ. Besides, we know that Solomon, when he wrote that, had no woman in his mind at all.

The Dame. If you mean to tell me that a man with three hundred wives could ever be *without* a woman in his mind——

[*The rest of the sentence is drowned in general*

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

laughter. Joan Barebegod looks shocked and displeased.

Mrs. Neve. Since Mistress Barebegod is so jealous of her Bible, there's a text I'd commend to her : " Touch not the Lord's anointed."

Joan. Be it far from me, friend, to bandy words with thee. But thou knowest it is also written : " The letter killeth, the spirit maketh alive."

The Dame. And, as Will Shakespeare has it, " the Devil can cite Scripture for his purpose " ¹ ; so we get no further that way.

[Philadelphia enters R. She carries her own small work-bag and a little pile of bandages which she takes to Joan. Then she picks up some linen and sits sewing in chair down L.]

Philadelphia. I've made these out of my last year's petticoat and in my own time, Mistress Barebegod, and I would have them go to the Parliament.

Mrs. Neve. Well !

Joan. Thank thee, friend.

Mrs. Neve. It seems to me, Althea, that the impartiality of this house errs in favour of General Cromwell.

Lady Shoales. I've no control over the maid's opinions, Kate. It was of myself and Nan that I spoke. If Philadelphia wishes her own contribution to go to the Parliament, to the Parliament it must go.

Joan (putting them into her basket). 'Twill gain me what I lost through my bees being so hasty.

Mrs. Neve. I think 'twould be wiser if green girls kept their opinions to themselves or else followed those of their betters.

Lady Shoales. Why, Kate, all Appledore knows that Philadelphia is only for the Parliament because young Nick Boorman is groom to General Fairfax !

The Dame (chuckling). Is that so ? Ha, the wench blushes !

¹ Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*, I. iii. 99.

WOMEN AT WAR

Philadelphia (hotly). Well, what better reason can any girl have for taking part in a quarrel than being on the side of the man she's—fond of?

Mrs. Neve (moved). God knows that's true enough.

Joan (severely). Methinks she has espoused a great cause for a very light inducement.

The Dame. As women ever will . . .

Lady Shoales. I sometimes wonder whether any cause is so great as the mighty hearts that champion it. . . .

Mrs. Neve (vehemently). The King's is !

Joan (contemptuously). The King's ! (*Working herself up as she speaks.*) A tyrant who has sold his people again and again to the Scots, and brought over Irish soldiery to butcher our men, who denies us the right of speech or of rule or of freedom to worship God as we think best ! Nay, friend, the King's cause is a little cause. But the cause of the people is a great valiancy, a battering against injustice and oppression, priestcraft and kingcraft——

Mrs. Neve (quietly). And a throwing of stones at helpless women whose men are at the wars.

The Dame. Ah, if Queen Bess had married and gotten a son we should have been spared these chip-chop times.

Nan (to Mrs. Neve). Didn't you say, Mistress, that you had a letter from Philip ? Mayn't we hear it ?

Mrs. Neve. I've no heart, Nan, to read my lad's letter to an unfriendly company.

Lady Shoales. Kate !

Joan. Now, the Lord be with thee, neighbour ! When all's said and done, I'm a woman—and a mother, too, though my imp can but tug at my skirts. Read thy letter in peace and in God's name. I'll sit mum, I promise thee.

Mrs. Neve (icily). I'm sure I'm obliged to Mistress Barebegod. [*She takes out the letter and unfolds it.*]

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

The Dame. A letter from a lad at the wars ! How my heart used to flutter over 'em in the old days !

Mrs. Neve (reading). " My darling little Mother—if, Madam, I be not lacking in respect so to call you "—lacking in respect !—" we are quartered in fair comfort here, and I am to thank you and the Appledore ladies, on behalf of our chirurgeon, for the linens and dressings you have sent. They are much needed by those of our troop that have wounds yet are not laid by. In truth, we cannot have too many, for of all these things there is a great and increasing scarcity." (*Looking round the room.*) And that is thanks to all who sew for the King's basket.

Lady Shoales. I think we may take it as a soldier's thanks to those who sew for either.

Mrs. Neve. " We have much riding to and fro, and foraging ; and I doubt not but one day soon we shall meet with the enemy and sting him soundly." Pray God you do, my son !

Joan. Nay, that's very provocative.

Mrs. Neve. " He "—that is, the enemy—" is in Northampton now, Cromwell and Ireton in command : good men both, but suet."

Joan (indignantly). Suet !

The Dame. It fits 'em ! By the Lord Harry, it fits 'em !

Joan. Suet, forsooth !

Mrs. Neve. " I would you could see our Prince Rupert. He is as I would have every general be : bold, dashing, and yet wary, with a light in his eyes, too, that it does your heart good to behold. I would the King left more to him, for he has gifts that would have won us this campaign thrice over ere now : but the King muffs all."

Joan. Aye, that's very true. The King muffs all.

Mrs. Neve. I would ask you to hold your tongue, Mistress Barebegod, in accordance with your promise.

WOMEN AT WAR

"They do not grow roses in Leicestershire that will vie with ours of Kent : but the lasses are fully as pretty, and freer, I think, with their kisses."

The Dame. And I'll warrant his judgment is the outcome of experience !

Mrs. Neve. "The corn promises well, particularly the wheat and the barley, if we do not spoil too much. These men we are fighting are fine fellows, and me-thinks there is little at bottom divides us."

Lady Shoales. And that's the truth !

Joan (shaking her head). No, he's wrong there.

Mrs. Neve. I, too, think he's wrong. Philip's over-young to understand politics. "They fight like men possessed. They have, I feel, an inward faith that matches our outward allegiance very prettily. There are some Appledore lads amongst them. One, Jack Squire, that was taken a few days since, tells me Hal Barebegod is in Cromwell's army—him that sang so shockingly through his nose and had the pretty wife."

<i>Lady Shoales</i>	} (laughing) {	Oh !
<i>Nan</i>		Oh !
<i>The Dame</i>		Oh !

Joan (confused and pleased). God bless the boy for calling me pretty ! Though 'tis a vanity in him and in me. But Hal does *not* sing through his nose.

Mrs. Neve. "It is quiet here and hot, but the stillness and the heat are not those of the marshes ; and I am sick for the long lights and the long shadows. I would give a guinea to hear the redshank call, but that it might break my heart. O Mother, I am weary of war. At best it is a bad business. Commend me to my sisters and to Roger. Teach him to be a King's man, but teach him, too, to be England's man. They may not always mean the same. From your ever-devoted son and servant, Philip Neve. If Jess pups keep me a dog-whelp."

[*There is a long silence after the reading of the letter,*

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

the women are too moved to comment. At last Joan speaks.

Joan. Thy son writes well, neighbour.

Lady Shoales (rising and pouring out the wine). I pray you have him home with you by the harvest.

Mrs. Neve. Philip will not come home till the business is fixed.

Joan. Nor my Hal neither.

The Dame. 'Twill take some fixing—this business betwixt suet and a muff!

Lady Shoales (as Nan and Philadelphia hand round glasses of wine and the comfits.) Kate, will you not drink a glass of malmsey wine? After so much reading your throat should be dry.

Mrs. Neve. I will, Althea, thank you. (*She raises her glass and rises.*) God for King Charles!

Joan (raising hers and rising). God for the Parliament!

Lady Shoales (quickly stopping the rivalry and rising). God for us all!

[*They sit again and there is a long pause after they have drunk.*]

The Dame (nibbling a comfit). You long promised me the secret of these French ratafias, my dear, but my Jill is still agog for it.

Lady Shoales. I crave your pardon, Dame. I've had it in my mind a hundred times since you asked me. The secret's very simple. Let her make them as she makes your macaroons but, instead of using only sweet almonds, they must be mixed half sweet and half bitter. And be sure, when she pounds them with the white of egg, that she don't let them oil. That's all there is to it. Will you tell Jill how vexed I am for my forgetting it?

The Dame. Half sweet and half bitter, and let them not oil? I shall remember.

Mrs. Neve. Now you've sown your recipe broadcast,

WOMEN AT WAR

Althea, for I've been taking a note of it, you may depend !

Joan. I, too ; though I'm no lover of the French and their ungodly cookery. Still, if I re-baptise them it may be I'll purge them of their vanity. They'll be " Kent comfits " on *my* table.

The Dame. So long as you make 'em toothsome I shan't scold you if you call them " Cromwell's Kisses."

[*There is a laugh at this in which Joan joins. They are forgetting their political differences.*

Lady Shoales. Mistress Barebegod has a prescription for coriander biscuits that would set your mouth a-water if she told it. Come, neighbour, fair's fair ; I've given you a notion. Do you give us one.

The Dame. Coriander biscuits ? They will be for the colic, surely ?

Joan. Oh, they're a grand remedy for the colic, for the hiccough and, indeed, for all diversities of the wind ; though they eat as a sweetmeat. Thou takest four eggs but the whites of two only, four spoonsful of orange flower water, two of rose water and spring water, together with a pound of fair sugar. Beat them together for an hour by the clock and then mix in a pound of flour well-dried and an ounce of coriander seeds. The whole thou must bake in a temperate oven till conveniently short.

Mrs. Neve (interested). I' faith, that's the very prescription I had from my Aunt Bates of Yalding, but that she is for the addition of cinnamon, or of ginger if the cinnamon be not favoured. And, indeed, we do make it with ginger ourselves.

Joan. The ginger may be well enough, I dare say. But methinks it complicates the flavours unduly. And good cookery, like good religion, should strive after simplicity.

Mrs. Neve. Nay, there I'm with you ! There's no more passionate Puritan in a kitchen than I.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Lady Shoales. And you have a recipe from the great Sir Kenelm Digby himself, I think, Kate.

Mrs. Neve (laughing). Yes, I have his directions for a plum cake. It cries for sixteen eggs, three pounds of butter, a pint of good ale, half a pint of sack and a pint of cream, and I know not what beside !

Joan. Lord ! A very kingly cake ! As Royalist as the great chemist himself. He's in France, so they say . . .

[*Mrs. Drood enters excitedly L. and comes to R. of Mrs. Neve.*

Lady Shoales. Mistress Drood ! [*Rises.*

Mrs. Drood (out of breath). I could not stay to be admitted. Have you heard the news ?

Several. News ? What news ?

Mrs. Drood. Why, there has been a pitched battle between King and Parliament in Northamptonshire. The King has triumphed !

Mrs. Neve (rising). God be praised !

Mrs. Drood. There are three thousand rebels slain and twice as many taken. Generals Cromwell and Ireton are being brought to London in chains.

Joan (rising). I'll not believe it ! (*To front of table R.*) Who brought the news ?

Mrs. Drood. Dick Quailes. It's just come through to Tenterden.

Joan. Oh, I know these Tenterden rumours !

Lady Shoales. What else ?

Mrs. Drood. That was all Drood could get from him. Dick's at every ale-house on the road, and now's too happy to talk.

Mrs. Neve. Oh, if we could but know 'twas true !

Joan (significantly). Aye—or false.

Lady Shoales (shaking her head). Somehow it doesn't ring a-right. . . .

Joan. Cromwell and Ireton taken ! When, in

WOMEN AT WAR

every line of Master Neve's letter, there's the King beat written as large as life !

Mrs. Neve (indignantly). That there's not, madam !
[*She moves to below L. of table.*]

Joan (to c.). I'll not believe it ! God cannot have deserted us so shamefully ! (*Realising what she has said : in confusion.*) That is—I should say—so unaccountably. I'll take no news from a drunken tinker. Why, Dick Quailes in his cups would deny his own mother !

Mrs. Neve. You may well say that. You would have sung a different tune if he'd brought news of a Parliament victory. I grant you Quailes is a drunken lout, but Fate chooses strange mouthpieces at times ! This is what we've prayed for through the quiet nights. (*Fervently, kneeling.*) I thank Thee, O God, for Thy great and overwhelming mercy !

[*There is a pause.*]

Lady Shoales. Right or wrong, there'll still be need of our work. There's no defeat without wounds, no victory without wounds. . . .

[*There is a long silence as the women return to their places and sewing. Mrs. Neve sits L. of the table. Then Nan begins to sing very, very softly :*

Nan. "Gather ye rose-buds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying :

And this same flower that smiles to-day——"

[*There is the quick drumming of galloping hooves, growing nearer and nearer. The women start and listen intently.*

Philadelphia (running to the window). A post ! A post !

Lady Shoales (also at the window). The Parliament post !

[*The hooves stop. All except Mrs. Neve and Joan crowd round the window.*

Mrs. Drood. He's stopping !

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Nan. Dismounting !

[*Philadelphia runs from the room R., followed by Nan.*

Lady Shoales. Nan, Nan . . .

[*She follows eagerly L.*

Mrs. Drood. He has a bulletin in his hand ! See, he's nailing it to the inn door !

[*She hurries out L.*

The Dame. A Royalist would have nailed it to the Church . . .

[*She goes slowly to window, leaning on her stick ; then passes out. Mrs. Neve goes on quietly working. Joan, you can see, is itching to follow the others.*

Joan. Art thou not going too, neighbour ?

Mrs. Neve (proudly). My son's troop has need of these . . .

[*Joan glances at her for a moment ; and then returns, with equal dignity, to her own sewing. There is a long pause. Then Philadelphia enters excitedly L.*

Philadelphia. A Parliament victory ! A Parliament victory !

[*She crosses the room and hurries out by the other door, still shouting. Murmurs and shouts from without can be heard. The two women try hard to appear composed. Mrs. Drood enters L.*

Mrs. Drood. The Parliament have beat the King at Naseby ! Three days since ! He's fled towards Scotland ! It's a rout—a rout ! There's five lads from Appledore killed.

Joan (rising, almost beside herself). Who ? Who ?

Mrs. Drood. John Humbleshaft of Ridge Farm, Peter Wickham, young Philip Neve by a bullet through his heart—— (*Realising what, in her excitement, she has let fall.*) O Mistress Neve, what have I said ?

[*Mrs. Neve stiffens in her chair, white and stricken.*

WOMEN AT WAR

Joan (*impetuously, moving L. slightly, she is agonised*).
And my man? My man? Is there news of Hal?

[Mrs. Drood looks at her, tries to speak but cannot, then covers her face with her hands and turns up stage and quickly exits L. Joan sinks into her chair and, stretching out her arms on the table before her, leans her head upon them and, after a moment, bursts into a storm of weeping. For a few seconds Mrs. Neve does not move. Then she reaches out her left hand and gropes along the table for Joan's fingers. The drums of another troop are heard, or possibly a bugle.]

CURTAIN

FOR FURTHER READING

John Drinkwater, *Oliver Cromwell* (full-length play).
B. M. Dix, "Allison's Lad," in *Nine Modern Plays* (Nelson).

QUESTIONS

1. "I've come to talk and laugh—if there's a laugh left in England to-day," says Dame Clibbutt. What instances of humour can you find in the play?

2. "England does better with a petticoat on the throne." Mention anything in the reigns of queens of England which supports or weakens Dame Clibbutt's case.

3. In what cases does the speech of Mistress Barebegod reflect her Puritanism?

4. "Mrs. Neve. God for King Charles!

Joan. God for the Parliament!

Lady Shoales. God for us all!"

Find other instances of Lady Shoales' capacity to rise above party feelings.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

For Written Work

5. Why does the dramatist introduce the discussion of recipes?
6. Describe the characters of Lady Shoales and Dame Clibbutt.
7. How does the dramatist catch the spirit of the period?
8. "The King muffs all." Illustrate this judgment by reference to the history of the period.

**“CHARLES—BY THE GRACE
OF GOD . . .”**

A Comedy in One Act

By T. C. WALKER

CHARACTERS

The Landlord of the George Inn.

His daughter Nell.

King Charles the Second.

Lady Juliana Coningsby.

Lord Harry Wilmot.

A Cromwellian Soldier.

“CHARLES—BY THE GRACE OF GOD . . .”

[Charles II, on his flight from the Battle of Worcester, had several narrow escapes, and the exciting story of his adventures has furnished material for other modern dramatists, because it is full of dramatic situations such as that which forms the basis of this play. The author has taken some liberties with the actual facts, however, and has added to the happenings at Bridport others which occurred elsewhere, so that the result must not be taken as more than an impression of the dangers from which Charles eventually got away.]

The facts are that Charles and Lady Juliana Coningsby, pretending to be runaway lovers, stayed at Charmouth on the night when Mrs. Limbry stole her husband's trousers. It was there that a smith saw that their horses had last been shod in Worcestershire, and the ostler, hoping to get the £1000 reward, went to tell the parson, who came too late to stop them. It was there that the landlady said she would think the better of her lips all her life because they had been kissed by the King. The next day the fugitives stopped at the “George” at Bridport, where a drunken ostler claimed to have known the young horseman in Exeter, and Charles sat drinking merrily as with an old friend, unmolested by the Roundhead soldiers who crowded the inn. Wilmot here joined the King and Lady Juliana, and they all moved on. A quarter of an hour later news arrived from Charmouth that the King was in the neighbourhood and the inn was searched and a party sent in chase; but the royal party eluded their pursuers.

The play captures some of the adventurous and romantic spirit of the King's journey, full of ruses and amazing strokes of luck. In addition, it helps the reader to see the youthful Charles, irresponsible, enjoying his play-acting, yet inclined occasionally to break into despair under the strain of continual danger; believing quite sincerely in his divine right to the throne, and surrounded by people who would risk anything for him.]

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

It is a fine evening in September 1651.

The Scene is the upper room of the "George Inn," Bridport. The furniture is rough and heavy, the room is heavily panelled in oak. Through a leaded window in the right wall the setting sun throws criss-cross patterns on the floor. There is a bench beneath the window.

In the back wall is a fireplace; L., a door to the stairs, R., an opening to a darkened passage.

The curtain rises on the Landlord and his daughter, Nell. The Landlord is a shifty fox of a man. Nell is a charming country girl of twenty.

The Landlord is diving into the contents of a valise which is lying on a table, L. C. Nell is kneeling by the fireplace brushing the hearth. Before either of them speaks, and occasionally throughout the play, there is a shout of raucous laughter from a crowd of men below.

Landlord (rummaging). Such frills and furbelows the woman has, such finery. *(He starts nervously.)* What noise was that, girl?

Nell. I heard nothing, Father.

Landlord. 'Twas you crackling the kindling. Come away from that fireplace, girl—you had me jumping from my skin. *[He returns to the valise.]*

Nell. Shall I not kindle the fire, Father?

Landlord. Eh?

Nell. Shall I not kindle the fire?

Landlord. Nay, woman, would you have me waste good fuel on such a pair?

Nell. It is autumn and the nights grow cold.

Landlord. Then let them freeze.

Nell. But, Father . . .

Landlord. I say, let the swine freeze. And do you stand over there by the passage and tell me if you hear them coming. *(Nell goes to the opening R.)* God save us, what is this? *(He pulls out a letter with a large red seal dangling.)* Aha, now we have you, my beauties.

“CHARLES—BY THE GRACE OF GOD . . .”

Nell. What is it, Father?

Landlord. What is it! What is it, eh! A letter, my girl, a letter with a seal to it!

Nell. Father, why do you make a mystery of them? The man is what he says he is—a groom who travels with his lady, and she, a lady on a journey to her kinswoman.

Landlord. A fine story, fine enough to deceive wits less sharp than mine! A groom, eh! I'll groom him. I tell you, girl, as sure as I'm alive that man is—is—Charles Stuart, put to rout at Worcester, and flying the country. Aye, and with a thousand guineas on his head.

Nell. I do not believe it.

Landlord. And who are you, a chit of a girl, to believe, or disbelieve? You did not see his haughty manner . . . “Landlord, stable my lady's horse . . . Landlord, a room for my lady, away from this rabble of soldiery.” “Away from the soldiers” do you note. Why should they hide from the soldiers if they are honest travellers? He has the manners of a King.

Nell. Charles Stuart is the King.

Landlord. What's that? Do you want to hang from the Inn sign for a Royalist? King or no King, there is a thousand guineas on the head of Charles Stuart. . . .

[During the last speech Charles has entered from the passage. He is dressed as a groom, aged twenty-one, dark, handsome, tall, with close-cropped hair.]

Charles. A large sum for a single head, Landlord.

Landlord (hastily hiding the letter). Indeed yes, a very large sum. *(He peers insolently at Charles.)* So you are my Lady's groom?

Charles. I am.

Landlord. I—I seem to know your face.

Charles (gently). I do not know yours, but believe me, I shall remember it to my dying day.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Landlord (with cunning). Which may not be far distant, eh?

Charles. We must all die soon or late, Landlord. But by your leave I will take my Lady her valise (*he sees it has been opened*) if you have finished with it. I trust her petticoats were to your liking.

Landlord. Nay, nay, I have not touched it.

Charles. Never waste a lie, man, when you cannot be believed. [*He goes out with the valise.*]

Landlord. The vermin! A deep one! Quickly, the letter before they see it is gone. (*He opens it.*) Look, girl, at the seal—did ever you see the like of that? Perhaps from the King of France—they say Charles Stuart is in league with him. Plague take it—I cannot read—my eyes are dimmed. Read it for me, girl.

Nell. But, Father, it is not mine or yours to read.

Landlord. Read it, I say.

Nell. But if they should return.

Landlord. Hasten then. [*She takes the letter.*]

Nell (reading). "To my Lady Coningsby, at the Manor of Trent, in the County of Dorset. My Lady, since I last wrote to you I would have you know that . . ." Father, 'tis not for our eyes.

Landlord. Devil take you, girl, read on.

Nell (very portentously, she is laughing at her father). . . . "I would have you know that your kinswoman, my wife, has been brought to bed with child, which was three weeks before her time. Wherefore I beg you with all haste to come to us, since . . . since with all matters of the Manor on hand, and no help to be had from any reasonable creature I am at sixes and sevens"—Poor man (*she sighs*), I cannot read the subscription, Father, but I do not think it is from the King of France.

Landlord. The letter is a blind. Does the woman look like a wet-nurse or the man either . . . ?

"CHARLES—BY THE GRACE OF GOD . . ."

[Lady Juliana Coningsby enters, from the passage-way, unseen by the others. She is twenty-six or -seven, a handsome woman dressed in a riding-habit of the period. She is followed by Charles.

I wager you he's Charles Stuart from the top of his head to the sole of his swaggering boots and the woman—I swear the woman is his mistress.

Juliana. Landlord !

Landlord. Oh ! milady.

Juliana. Landlord, your mind is as foul as your inn.

Landlord. Milady, I meant no harm, milady. It was but a figure of speech, a slip of the tongue.

Juliana. Aye, and but a slip of the hand to rifle my valise. I doubt not you have read the letter from my kinsman.

Landlord. Milady, I . . .

Juliana. Then perhaps you will return it to me . . .

Landlord. Milady . . .

Juliana. At once ! or shall my man take it from you ? [Charles advances.

Landlord. No, no—here it is, milady.

Juliana. Now leave us. We do not wish to be disturbed.

Landlord. Yes, milady. (*He sidles to the door.*) I understand, (*unpleasantly*) indeed I understand.

[*He exits door L., very hurriedly as Charles moves towards him.*

Charles. The fox !

[*Nell has remained by the window. Now she comes forward.*

Nell. Milady—your Majesty—

Juliana. Quiet, girl ! What are you saying ?

Nell. I know him, milady. I know he is the King. I pray you both to have a care.

Charles. Are you for the King, my girl ?

Nell. Indeed I am, your Majesty.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Charles. An English rose ! *[He goes to her.]*

Nell. Your Majesty, I must go.

Charles. Nay, you shall stay.

Nell. No—my father—I dare not—I must watch him. He suspects your Majesty and he may tell the soldiers—I beg you have a care and I will help you if I can. *[Exit L.]*

Charles (after a pause). So we have at least one friend in this accursed inn. *[He goes to the window.]*

Juliana. But her father is an enemy, your Majesty. We are in a trap.

Charles. A trap—by heaven, you are right ! *(He opens the window. There is another shout of laughter from below.)* A troop of rebel horse and a fox of an inn-keeper ! I had as soon share an inn with the devil himself.

Juliana. Wherefore I beg your Majesty not to expose yourself.

Charles. The King must hide his face from twenty misbegotten hirelings, eh ?

Juliana. Your Majesty knows well the price upon your head.

Charles. Full well, Juliana, yet had they priced me higher I had been dead a hundred times.

Juliana. No, your Majesty, some love you so well they would not sell you for ten thousand thousand guineas.

Charles. You shame me, Juliana. You are one of my faithful and loyal subjects. Egad, if we could escape this trap then—then—we should but fall into another. Look, Juliana *(she comes to him at the window)*—a quiet country, green lanes, and hanging boughs, gentle hills and the evening mist rolling down the valleys to the sea. A lovely land—yet Death waits for me in every corner.

[A shout of laughter from below.]

Juliana. A fine country to live in, your Majesty.

“CHARLES—BY THE GRACE OF GOD . . .”

Charles. And to die in. I am weary. They have hunted me so long. I long to cry, “Here I am, take me, kill me, but, by our Lady, give me peace.”

Juliana. A slow killing. . . .

Charles. Yes, that is true. They would worry at me. A mockery of trial, and then, another grinning Stuart head in Whitehall and Stuart blood dripping to the pavement.

Juliana. Not only Stuart blood. My blood too—there is a penalty for helping your Majesty.

Charles. I pray God I may never be unmindful of your courage, Juliana, and of the debt I owe you.

[He takes her hands. They stand with the sunlight on them. It is pleasant to believe at this moment that Charles will not forget. Juliana starts away and looks across the street.]

Juliana. Your Majesty—look. *(She points.)* 'Tis Harry Wilmot.

Charles. 'Fore God, so 'tis.

[Juliana beckons across the street.]

Juliana. He sees us. He crosses the road.

Charles. Poor Harry is blown, but not so blown as his mare. . . . *(He leans out.)* Come up, Harry, come up.

Juliana. Stand back, your Majesty *(pulling him away and leaning out)*. Stand in your saddle, Harry. The soldiers are in the yard at the back. Quick and they will not see. So—you can reach.

[Two hands appear at the window ledge and presently the head and shoulders of Harry Wilmot. He is a jovial thick-set man of forty—he can just get through the window.]

Wilmot (gasping). Pull, for God's sake, pull.

[They do so—he lands on the floor with a thud.]

Wilmot. Egad, I thought I should stick half way. I lose no flesh, your Majesty, though I've scarce had

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

a square meal for a month. (*He scrambles to his feet.*) Thank God I find your Majesty safe!

Charles. Safe is not quite the right word, Harry. There is a troop of rebel horse quartered in this inn. But tell us your news.

Wilmot. One moment, your Majesty, my mare. (*He goes to the window and looks out, comes back with his fingers to his lips.*) Ssh—I thought so, safe enough. Asleep, your Majesty, fast asleep. A fine mare, Dolly, but given overmuch to sleep. The moment she halts sweet slumber takes her in his arms. Not but what she wakes quick enough at the smell of the nose-bag.

Juliana. How did you find us, Harry?

Wilmot. I will tell you. . . . Your Majesty, I say confound the man who cannot keep his breeches safe.

Charles. Oddsfish yes, a man should be master of his own breeches. But you still have yours.

Wilmot. And never will lose them, for it unmans a man to be without breeches. But listen; while you lay at the inn at Charmouth last night, I waited on the beach for Limbry, the sailor, to bring his boat to carry you to France. But he did not come. So I set forth to find him, for had he not a hundred sovereigns for carrying us to France? Your Majesty will scarce believe what had happened.

Charles. What was it?

Wilmot. I found him in his house, locked in the bedroom.

Charles. A woman, eh?

Wilmot. Not a woman, a she-devil, his wife. She had got word of the affair and being frightened for him, stole his breeches and locked him in. There he was, teeth chattering, knees knocking, cursing women, wind, and his naked legs, and our fair wind for France whistling round his hams.

Charles. And then?

Wilmot. I bade him keep the hundred sovereigns

“CHARLES—BY THE GRACE OF GOD . . .”

and buy himself a hundred pair of breeches. Then back to Charmouth, you gone, and the place full of soldiers ; but, your Majesty, while there the place thrown into an uproar at the news of your Majesty's death.

Charles. But I am not dead, Harry.

Wilmot. Not here, your Majesty, not here. But you are dead in Charmouth, seven miles away. For a man came galloping in, crying he had caught and slain your Majesty near Pilsden Hill, bringing your coat for proof and calling Heaven to witness that the thousand guineas for your head were his.

Charles. But I still have my coat.

Wilmot. So I see, your Majesty, so I see. I know your Majesty was not slain, because the coat he had was not yours. (*He roars with laughter.*) Besides I knew you were not riding Pilsden way. But I did not breathe a word. Who was I to come between a man and a thousand guineas? for indeed he was honest enough, though drunk, and had slain somebody—oh, yes, he had slain somebody, but not your Majesty.

[*He laughs again.*]

Juliana. And they believed him?

Wilmot. I'faith, yes. Bells ringing, ale flowing, the village dancing for the death of Charles Stuart. But I hit Dolly on the rump to waken her, whispered the truth in her ear and so after you.

Juliana. Would to God false news of your Majesty's death were to come to this inn.

Charles. Aye. But here I am, very much alive, in company with a troop of rebels.

Wilmot. Do they suspect your Majesty?

Charles. The landlord does, and he's against me. But not the soldiers. We were into them before we knew. My Lady Juliana saved us then, for she cursed me roundly for setting her down from her horse in a puddle. She has a sharp tongue and I looked little of a king.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Juliana. Your Majesty splashed me to my knees.

Charles. Heaven forgive me, Juliana—such shapely limbs shall henceforth be my constant care.

Juliana. Your Majesty is kind. For the present I will have a care of them myself.

Wilmot. Your Majesty—perhaps it were as well we discussed my Lady's limbs when you and they are in a safer place. You say the landlord is not safe.

Charles. He is off the scent for a moment. But if poking and prying can find the truth, he'll have it in an hour.

Wilmot. And then . . .

Charles. And then the bells of this town will ring at my death, Harry, and they will not lie.

Juliana (suddenly). They shall lie!

Charles. Egad, they shall not ring at all. Am I to be caught like a rat in a trap? Come, Harry, let's ride boldly forth.

Juliana. No, no, your Majesty—wait!

Charles. I tell you I am weary of this hiding. Has courage vanished with my kingdom? I'll not wait another moment. If death has come at last, let's face it.

[He strides towards the door. There is a shout of laughter from below.]

Juliana. Your Majesty, you shall not!

Charles. I say, I shall! Am I to be ruled by a petticoat? Do you dare command me?

Juliana. I dare anything—have I not dared everything? And I say you shall not go yet.

[She holds him.]

Charles. Unhand me, woman!

Juliana. No, I will not. Help me, my lord Harry!

Charles. 'Fore God!

Wilmot. Your Majesty, for God's sake wait.

Charles. Let me go, I say.

[He tries to throw them off, and swinging his arm, strikes Juliana's face.]

"CHARLES—BY THE GRACE OF GOD . . ."

Juliana (stricken). Charles—Your Majesty . . .
[*She covers her face with her hands.*]

Charles. Juliana—forgive me.

[*In a flash his anger is gone and he is all contrition.*]

Juliana. It is nothing—but I beg your Majesty to wait—I have a plan.

Charles. What is it?

Juliana. If the bells of Bridport rang because your Majesty was dead, then indeed you could ride boldly forth.

Charles. Dead. . . .

Juliana. Do you not see?

Wilmot. I'faith—I have it. Milady, you're a witch! It needs but another soldier to kill a stranger, and they are all for killing strangers, bring back his coat for proof and your Majesty is dead, in Bridport as in Charmouth.

Juliana. Not a soldier. You, Harry, they do not know you. Will you play the part?

Wilmot. With all my heart. Whom shall I kill?

Juliana. There is no need to kill. You must creep a mile from the town, turn your mare about, come back again hell for leather with news of the King's death.

Wilmot. I doubt that Dolly can bestir herself to gallop. I'll ask her when she wakens. But I must have a coat to bring to show I've killed the King.

Juliana. Nay, you shall have better proof than that.

Charles. Bring them my head on a charger, Harry—then they'll believe.

Juliana. Your Majesty, I am trying to help you. If you cannot assist perhaps you will . . .

Charles (laughing). Keep silence, eh! There goes my Kingdom again, Harry! England has lost a King and found a Queen.

Juliana (to Wilmot). You shall bring his Majesty's gauntlets.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Charles. Not that, Juliana, I will not part with them. They were given me by my father.

Juliana. They have your Majesty's name and a crown worked in silver. How often have I begged you to be rid of them! What better proof that you are the King?

Charles. They are all that is left to me of my father. You cannot have them.

Juliana. We are in danger. There are other lives than yours.

[There is a silence. Charles takes the gauntlets from his coat and hands them to Wilmot.]

Charles. Take them, Harry.

Juliana. And ride for your life, my lord.

Wilmot. I'll ride as fast as Dolly will run. Would to God you would let me kill some lecherous rebel and show his blood upon my sword, then I could bring colour to the part.

Juliana. There is no time.

Wilmot. No time to kill a rebel! I'faith we *are* in a hurry!

Juliana. Is all safe below?

Wilmot. Aye, no one in sight. Just Dolly dozing. (*Leaning out*) Hi, my pretty, stir yourself!

Juliana. You must go at once.

Wilmot. Then lower me gently, and for God's sake push me if I stick.

[He goes out feet first. The others help him. His hands disappear from the sill.]

Charles. God speed you, Harry!

Juliana. Ride like the devil, my lord.

[The clip-clop of his horse's hooves rises to a gallop and dies away in the distance.]

Juliana. And now we must wait.

[Charles comes to her.]

Charles. Juliana, forgive me. I struck you.

"CHARLES—BY THE GRACE OF GOD . . ."

Juliana. Your Majesty's hand was not heavy. You have much to bear.

Charles. I struck you on the face. May I not make amends? [*He advances to kiss her.*]

Juliana. No, no, your Majesty, else I should have you striking me all day and making amends.

Charles. The offer was well intentioned.

Juliana. A woman is seldom in doubt as to your Majesty's intentions.

Charles (*he comes closer to her*). *Juliana*—in fifteen minutes we may be free to run before the hounds again—or we may be caught. In the meantime . . .

[*He tries to take her in his arms.*]

Juliana. No, your Majesty.

Charles. *Juliana!* have you no feeling?

[*He holds her.*]

Juliana. It is my turn to command you to unhand me and, by heaven! you shall. (*She pushes him from her.*) You dare to ask me if I have no feeling? Have I not felt for you those fourteen days? (*Her face is flaming.*) Do you think I would have risked my life had I no feeling? and now, when death is on the very threshold, you would toy with me as though I were a doll. . . . (*She is speechless for a moment.*) Will your Majesty never grow up?

Charles. Never, *Juliana.*

[*He laughs, but we know he has met his match.*]

Juliana. Then toy with life, your Majesty, but do not toy with me.

[*Charles is at a loss for an answer. At this moment the door L. bursts open and Nell enters. She is breathless.*]

Nell. Your Majesty, milady—one of the soldiers . . .

Juliana. Yes, girl.

[*There are stumbling footsteps outside.*]

Nell. Coming now—my father has told him.

Charles. I'll settle him. [*He goes towards the door.*]

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Nell. No, no ! The others will hear you. Carefully, I beg you. The soldier is a little drunk. I will help you—trust me.

Juliana. Listen, girl—we must hold them for five minutes—then we are safe.

[*A Cromwellian Soldier enters with drawn sword. He is a little drunk. The Landlord follows, but is at pains to keep out of harm's way.*

Landlord (*pointing to Charles*). There he is—there is our thousand guinea soldier.

Soldier (*advancing to Charles*). I know your face.

Charles (*eyeing him*). Oddsfish, another of them . . . and is my face to your liking ?

Soldier. 'Fore God, you are a calm one. (*He turns to Landlord.*) Call the others, there is danger in his eye.

Charles. Are you afraid, soldier ? I am unarmed.

Landlord. Aye. Take him yourself, soldier. We must not share the reward with thirty others.

[*The Soldier hesitates. Juliana crosses to him.*

Juliana. Have pity on us, sir, we are lovers, and you have loved, yourself.

Soldier. Lovers ! I think, sir, that you are Charles Stuart.

Juliana. No, no ! Listen, sir—we ride together as a lady and her groom. That is but half the truth, a poor deception.

Landlord. Indeed it is !

Juliana. We are lovers. (*She puts her arms around Charles' neck to prove her words.*) He is my groom and my lover, and we ride away secretly together.

Nell (*innocently*). Oh, is not that beautiful !

Landlord. Beautiful indeed—a lovely lie. But ask her where they ride from, soldier, that'll fetch them.

Soldier. Aye, whence come ye ?

Juliana. We ride from . . .

Nell (*breaking in*). Why, from Worcestershire.

“CHARLES—BY THE GRACE OF GOD . . .”

Landlord. Silence, girl . . .

Nell. But is it not so, milady? My father and the soldier have seen . . .

Landlord. Woman, be quiet . . .

Nell. . . . Have seen your mare was last shod in Worcestershire and so they thought you were the King, sir. But I say why should a King ride from battle with a lady a-pillion. Does he take ladies into battle? And now we find the truth, that you are lovers. *Is not that beautiful?*

Landlord. 'Fore God, I'll pluck the tongue from out your prating mouth.

Soldier. Steady, man. . . .

Landlord. Has she not told them what we found? Come here, you gabbling wench.

Nell. But, Father. . . .

Landlord. Come here, I say.

[He goes towards her threateningly.]

Nell (going to Soldier). Oh help me, sir, my father means me harm.

[She clings to him enticingly.]

Landlord. Let me have her.

Soldier. Nay, landlord, you shall not touch her.

Nell. He will beat me. Help me—I am fainting.

[She throws her weight into his arms. The Soldier drops his sword.]

Soldier. She's fainted. *[He lowers her to the ground.]* Her eyelids flutter. I'faith, what lovely lips!

Juliana. Stroke her hand, sir. 'Tis a certain cure for faintness.

Landlord. 'Tis but a sham, I tell you. Let me get to her. I'll soon cure her.

Soldier (the wine in him is speaking). Stand back, unnatural man, is she not your own daughter and a lovely one at that. Ah! she opens her eyes.

[A horse is heard galloping in the distance.]

Nell (faintly). I am frightened.

[The horse comes nearer.]

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Soldier. Nay, nay, my pretty, you are safe.

[The horse draws up below. There is a shout below. The Soldier helps Nell to her feet.]

Nell. I am better. But hold me, sir, I tremble at the knees.

Soldier. I'll hold you right enough.

[He does. Charles picks up the sword.]

Landlord. Watch him, soldier, he has your sword.

Charles (laughing). Have no fear, sir—take your sword. Nay, I see your arms are better occupied. Let me sheathe it for you. *[He does so.]*

[The noise below grows louder.]

Landlord. For God's sake, take him now.

Soldier (puzzled). But he has given me back my sword. Tell me, sir—are you the King?

Charles (looks at him fixedly). Am I the King? *(He laughs bitterly.)* There is no King in England now. We ride from Worcester, it is true, and there, a fortnight since all that is left of kingship perished. But tell me, sir, if I were the King would you, a common soldier, dare to lift your sword against me now? The King, ordained by God to rule England for the people's good, is vanquished; a price upon his head, he flies the country, yet would you kill him, would you dare to kill him, if you could?

Soldier. There is power in your tongue. You almost turn me Royalist.

Charles. God forbid! That were an unhappy cause to espouse just now. *(There is the pride of all the Stuarts in his voice.)* And yet I think that even now the King has faithful subjects. For loyalty to the King is loyalty to England and to God, since God made England and the King to rule it. Not Marston Moor, nor Worcester field, nor scaffolds built in Whitehall can alter that, for the King is King by the grace of God, and not the will of man.

[During this speech the noise below has grown louder]

and louder. As Charles finishes speaking a man is heard to shout high above the others “The King is dead.” Then there is silence everywhere for a moment; the people on the stage are still. Presently the noise breaks out again, there is rattling of bridle chains, clatter of horses’ hoofs, shouting and cries of “The Stuart is dead.” The Soldier strides to the open window. The Landlord approaches Charles.

Landlord (he is bewildered and frightened). The King is dead . . . But you are . . .

Charles. The King is King by the grace of God. He will not die at the hands of men.

[The Landlord shrinks from him. Wilmot enters.

Wilmot. Where is the landlord of this accursed inn?

Soldier (coming from the window). They say Charles Stuart is slain.

Wilmot. Aye, that he is. Did I not kill him myself two miles away upon the London road. See, I bring his gauntlets for proof. Look—the royal crown and his sign!

Soldier (taking the gauntlets). The royal crown—’tis so; you say you killed him?

Wilmot. Yes—and the whole place gone mad for joy of it. Barrels broached in the inn—the place swimming in wine, and the soldiers drinking free because the landlord is not there to serve them.

[He roars with laughter.

Landlord (panic-stricken). No, no—they must not steal my wine.

Wilmot. Are you—the landlord?

Landlord. Aye, they must not steal my wine. Stop them—stop them.

Wilmot. Stop them yourself—are you not master of your own house? Hasten, man, hasten.

[The Landlord scuttles out. Wilmot hastens his departure.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Soldier (looks first at Charles, then at the gauntlets, then at Wilmot). You say you've killed Charles Stuart?

[*In the distance the bells of Bridport begin to peal.*]

Wilmot. You hear the bells—they peal for his death.

Nell (to *Soldier*). Come, sir, I will give you wine.

Charles. You shall drink to the death of Charles Stuart.

[*The Soldier is puzzled. He looks at Wilmot again, then goes to Charles and peers into his face. Presently a smile lights on his face—it grows and grows until he roars with laughter.*]

Soldier. I'faith, my pretty, yes. I will drink, I will drink. (*He is suddenly serious and hands Charles the gauntlets.*) But not to—to—the death of the King, God save you, Sir. (*To Nell*) Come, my chicken.

[*He goes out, followed by Nell.*]

Juliana. And so 'tis done, my lord.

Wilmot. Yes, 'tis done. I lashed poor Dolly to a lather. I'faith she'll sleep for a month now.

Charles. And they believed you, Harry?

Wilmot. Aye, they believed.

[*The bells ring louder.*]

Charles. And because I am dead they ring the bells!

Wilmot. But some weep, your Majesty.

Charles. Some weep, and some laugh—a strange world, Harry.

[*There is a silence.*]

Juliana. We must go quickly.

Wilmot. Aye, strike back across the moor to Trent. There is no wind for France and no boat to take us.

[*Nell enters with wine cups on a tray.*]

Charles. Here is our play actress. Oddsfish, 'twas well done! A pretty swoon.

Nell. I have brought wine for your Majesty and you, Milady, and for you, sir. You must drink it and go.

[*They take the wine cups but do not drink.*]

Charles (to *Nell*). Tell me—why did you help me?

“CHARLES—BY THE GRACE OF GOD . . .”

Nell. Your Majesty—my brother was killed at Marston Moor. He was for the King and so am I.

Charles. My girl—you shall drink too.

Nell. Not I, your Majesty.

Charles. Yes, it is our command (*he hands her his cup*). You shall drink my health from my cup.

Nell. Your Majesty, I . . .

[*She takes the cup and she—Wilmot and Juliana drink, whispering: “His Majesty the King.”*

Charles takes his cup and drinks.

Charles. “To my loyal and faithful subjects.”

[*There is a moment’s silence. The bells are silent too, then a burst of laughter from below.*

Wilmot. Come, your Majesty. I’ll wake Dolly.

[*He goes.*

Juliana. Farewell, my chick. You have done well.

[*She goes and Charles follows. Nell stops him.*

Nell. Your Majesty, may I kiss your hand.

Charles. Sweet one, may I kiss your lips.

[*He does so.*

Nell. Your Majesty, I shall think the better of my lips all the days of my life.

Charles. God bless you.

Nell. And God save the King!

[*He goes out. Nell goes to the window. The setting sun has turned to red and shines full on her. There is a sound of horses moving off. The bells ring louder. Nell leans from the window, waves and blows a kiss.*

[*And the CURTAIN falls.*

FOR FURTHER READING

E. M. Barling, “His Majesty Masquerades,” in *Prize Plays and Some Others* (Oxford Univ. Press).

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Margaret Ashworth, *The Swift Decoy* (one-act play).

John Buchan, "The Escape of King Charles after the Battle of Worcester," in *A Book of Escapes and Hurried Journeys*.

Allan Fea, *After Worcester Fight*.

QUESTIONS

1. Suggest other suitable titles for the play.
2. What is the dramatist's purpose in introducing the scene where Nell swoons?
3. Look up on a map the places mentioned.
4. What is meant by "Divine Right of Kings"? Do you believe in it? What was Cromwell's opinion?

For Written Work

5. Imagine that Charles had been captured and write a short play on his capture.
6. Write a dialogue between the ostler and the parson at Charmouth. (The latter was John Wesley's great grandfather.)
7. Which part would you like to act in this play? Explain why.
8. Invent a dialogue between Limbry and his wife about the captured trousers.
9. What induced people to risk their lives by helping Charles to escape when they could have had £1000 for giving him up? Which would you have done?

QUEEN DICK

An Episode founded upon the Novel

By ALFRED TRESIDDER SHEPPARD

And Dramatised by

F. A. HEPWORTH

CHARACTERS

Elizabeth Cromwell, widow of the late Protector Oliver.

Dorothy Cromwell, wife of the Protector Richard.

Bridget, wife of General Fleetwood, and daughter of Oliver.

Rachel Baines, waiting-woman to Lady Fleetwood.

Richard Cromwell (nicknamed Queen Dick).

Daniel, manservant to Richard Cromwell, and formerly to Oliver.

Colonel Lord Howard, in command of Life Guards.

Colonel Ingoldsby, commanding a regiment of horse.

Colonel Whalley, also commanding a regiment of horse.

Cornet Byrd, of the Guard.

Mr. Secretary Thurloe.

QUEEN DICK

[If a tragedy is a situation where an admirable man is placed in such circumstances that the flaws in his character bring about his downfall, the career of Richard Cromwell might be considered tragic, for in spite of his gifts of intellect and character he had neither the temperament nor the will to rule as his father had done. Yet to most readers of history he is merely a failure, ridiculed by his contemporaries as "Queen Dick" and "Tumble-down Dick," and it is not of such stuff that tragedies are made. The tragic hero may be a failure, but he must be heroic ; there must be something sublime in his struggle.

In this play an attempt has been made to bring out the tragedy in his dilemma. He was faced with the decision whether he would shed blood to uphold his position or allow the army to seize power ; and we should not condemn him as a weakling merely because he gave in to avoid violence. Had he decided to fight and lost his life in the upshot his failure would at first consideration have seemed more heroic, but it would not necessarily have been a braver choice. Nevertheless, we tend to associate with the heroes of tragedy the courage to battle with their fate rather than the courage to accept it meekly.

The actual events of his fall, and some of the real persons concerned in it, are here presented against a background of women. The attitude of the women who increase the sense of Richard's isolation even in his own family is authentic, and the support of Rachel Baines, though a little romanticised, is also based on historical evidence. In bringing these women to life the author has filled in from imagination the scantier outline which History provides. They are a means of putting forward the different points of view on the crisis, and in one place Bridget Fleetwood is made, for the dramatist's convenience, to bring a message from Desborough which in historical fact he brought himself. In the main, however, the events of the play are historically

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

accurate and much of the dialogue is based on words known to have been used.]

SCENE.—*A room in the Palace of Whitehall, in the year 1659, five months after the death of the Great Protector. The apartment is panelled, and hung with tapestries. A small diamond-paned window at the back looks out upon a courtyard. A door opens into an ante-room. Another door leads to private apartments.*

In the middle of the room stands an oak table, to one side of which is a chair covered in crimson damask, and ornamented in gold. Against the wall is an Italian inlaid escritoire.

At the opening of the scene Elizabeth Cromwell, widow of the late Protector, is sitting in a low chair. At the table is seated Dorothy, wife of the Protector Richard ; she is reading a large Bible or book of sermons.

The older lady is plainly dressed in black ; Dorothy is more richly dressed, and her manner, although tinged with piety, shows her conscious of her high station.

Elizabeth (anxiously). Surely it is growing late ; has not Richard returned from the Council ?

Dorothy (irritably). I cannot say ; he tells me nothing of his movements. I really think he tries to be difficult and contrary. Only this morning he promised to go with me to the chapel, a most uplifting discourse by our dear Dr. Howe.¹ But he left me to go alone. Of what use is it to be Lady Protectress if one can have no better company than a waiting-woman ?

Elizabeth. You should be thankful you can have him at home, child ; I never had more than half a husband when the wars began. Little did I think when I married Oliver that he would go for a soldier and leave me so much alone ; though to be sure it is

¹ John Howe, Chaplain of the House of Lords.

QUEEN DICK

something to have been the wife of such a great man (*with a sigh*).

Dorothy. Richard does not give me much of his company ; he is always at meetings of the Council, or closeted with Mr. Thurloe,¹ discussing affairs of the State—when he is not engaged in hunting or some other godless pursuit. But there, it was always so ; he has always been careless of his soul's welfare, and has never a thought for me, nor for all my anxiety about the children.

Elizabeth. Has he not anxieties enough ? They tell me there are quarrels between the Parliament and the Army,² and disputes in the Council. Those who were our friends are so no longer ; they seek only their own advantage and forget who raised them to their high places.

Dorothy. Richard is too easy with them ; he should send some of them to the Tower and let them know their master.

Elizabeth. I doubt he was not meant to be a great ruler ; he was always a peaceable lad, and hated fighting ; I expect that is why they call him " Queen Dick." I fear there is more trouble brewing ; he seemed very anxious this morning and ate scarcely anything. He will be famished when he comes in.

Dorothy. His man will attend to him, no doubt.

Elizabeth (rather sharply). I never trusted a servant to look after my husband ; I always went to the kitchen and saw to his meals myself, even after we came to live in a palace. An anxious man has a queasy stomach, and it is a wife's place to look after him, even if he is Lord Protector.

Dorothy (haughtily). The kitchen is no fit place for

¹ Secretary of State and Richard's chief adviser.

² They were mainly about arrears of pay and the question of whether the General should have power to appoint officers independently of Parliament.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

a Protector's wife. And besides, my time is taken up with the children ; they can't be left to the care of the waiting-women.

Elizabeth. They were happy enough when Rachel was here, and she was devoted to them. I can't think why you let her go.

Dorothy. I can't think why I kept her so long.

[*There is a scratching sound on the door, and Daniel enters ; he is an elderly man, with very little hair, wears a monkish habit of dark brown and speaks in a high-pitched voice, and with a sanctimonious manner, except when addressing his master, whom he prefers to treat with affectionate familiarity. He carries a small Bible in his hand and turns to it whenever his attention is not distracted by his duties.*

What is it, Daniel ?

Daniel. Lady Fleetwood's¹ gentlewoman is below, my lady—

Dorothy (hastily). Rachel ! She can wait. Where is His Highness ?

Daniel. My Lord is still holding council with the ungodly.

Dorothy. What do you mean, fellow ? Surely His Highness must have left the Council meeting by now ?

Daniel (turning up his eyes to the ceiling). Behold, I have opened my mouth and my words are of the uprightness of my heart.

Dorothy (impatiently). You may go. See that the food is prepared for His Highness's return.

[*Daniel turns to go, but is stopped by Elizabeth.*

Elizabeth (anxiously). Daniel !

[*He turns and comes down towards her.*

Daniel (respectfully). Mistress !

Elizabeth. Where is Master Dick ?

Daniel. Still at the Council, mistress.

¹ Fleetwood was Lieutenant-General of the army.

QUEEN DICK

Elizabeth. But why is he so late? Is there more trouble?

Daniel (*hesitates, looks at his Bible, and reads in his sanctimonious voice*). It is written, "Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house. Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing."

Elizabeth (*sharply*). Daniel! Is Master Dick in danger?

Daniel (*hesitating*). No, mistress—not yet—but he must beware of his friends.

[He turns and is going towards the door, but stops and speaks to Dorothy.]

Lady Fleetwood's gentlewoman says Her Ladyship is waiting and would speak to His Highness on a matter of some urgency.

Dorothy (*haughtily*). Ask Her Ladyship to join us here, until His Highness returns. *[Exit Daniel.]* What business can be so pressing that Bridget must come herself to see Richard?

[Enter Lady Fleetwood, attended by Rachel Baines. Her ladyship is handsome and well dressed, but severe and important. Rachel is young and rather pretty, with quiet, graceful manners.]

Bridget (*coming down*). You are pale, mother; you should be resting. (*Turning to Dorothy*) Ah, Dorothy, they told me you were still at Hampton Court with the children.

[She sits in the big oak chair, and Rachel stands behind her.]

Dorothy (*rather peevishly*). Oh, the palace is dull; we see no one and hear no sermons. There are no preachers like our dear Dr. Howe. And (*proudly*) my duty is here with the Protector, my husband.

Bridget. I hoped to find my brother here; I have a message from Charles which he bade me deliver to him myself.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Elizabeth. What mischief is afoot now, Bridget?

Bridget. The trouble is with the Parliament; they presume to give orders to the Army, and refuse to permit meetings of the officers.

Elizabeth (quietly). Why not, my dear? Is not the work of Parliament to order the affairs of State?

Bridget (haughtily). It was not the custom in my father's time for the Generals to obey the commands of Parliament.

Elizabeth. Your father was himself the Lord General, child.

Bridget. And would it not be well for England if a General were in command now? Is it right that we should be ruled by lawyers? What has Parliament done? What has Richard done for England that he should command armies and appoint and dismiss Generals? What knows he of fighting and command?

Elizabeth (sadly). Fighting! Can there be no end to fighting and bloodshed?

Dorothy (sharply). But Richard was his eldest son. It is right that he should be Protector after his father.

Bridget. Because my father was a king in all but name, was my brother a prince that he should succeed him? Would not a man like——(*She breaks off, and in a lower tone continues*) Richard is weak; let him give my husband leave to dissolve Parliament as did the Great Protector; let him rule with the aid of the Generals and the Army. Can you not persuade him, mother?

Elizabeth. Persuade him, child! Not I! Had I tried to persuade his father in matters of State, a pretty sermon he would have read me about Government by Petticoat. No, Richard is all for peace, and ruling with the help of Parliament.

Bridget. But they will not listen to him. And certain it is that the Army will obey Charles and General Lambert rather than a lawyer.

QUEEN DICK

[*While she is speaking, Richard enters quietly. A faint smile of recognition passes between him and Rachel. The others turn quickly on hearing him shut the door.*

Dorothy. Richard ! Bridget is right ; your Parliament is getting out of hand. Would the Lord Protector, your father, have yielded to them ? He would have taken a handful of soldiers and locked them out, and (*harshly*) he would have sent the leaders to the block.

Richard (impatiently). I have no love for violence and imprisonment ; that will not make them support me.

Dorothy (scoffing). Did not one of them say, " Our young ruler cannot make even a footman obey him ? "

Richard (irritated). I can make ten regiments obey me more easily than a wife !

Bridget (sharply). No regiments will obey you if you have not the Generals on your side. My husband bade me urge you to dismiss the Parliament and to say he will take care of your interests and see that England has peace.

[*Richard stands in thought, then looks up at her and slowly shakes his head.*

(*Angrily*) My uncle Desborough¹ says that if you refuse their help they will pull you out of Whitehall by the ears and dissolve the House with their swords.

[*Pause—dead silence. They all gaze at Richard, Mrs. Cromwell and Rachel anxiously, Dorothy and Bridget with set hostility. He is deep in thought, passes a hand over his brow, then looks at his wife and at Bridget, then walks to the door, opens it, and stands aside.*

Come, Rachel. The coach is waiting.

[*Lady Fleetwood sweeps out majestically, followed*

¹ He had married Oliver Cromwell's sister.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

by Rachel, who turns suddenly with a glance of sympathy at Richard before the door closes.

Richard (moving slowly and speaking very gently). Doll, this place is not safe for you. Will you not go to the children at Hampton Court?

Dorothy (sulkily). The palace is dull and there are no godly ministers whom one may hear daily as in London, and the air is not good for the children; they are always ailing there; they shall go to Hursley with one of my women, but (*obstinately*) as the wife of the Protector my place is here.

Richard (wearily). Well, as you please——

[Dorothy goes behind table, and faces audience.]

Dorothy. If Whitehall is not safe, is it not because you will not use your power? Because you are afraid to punish the rebellious Commons? What will happen if Lord Desborough's threat be carried out? Bridget Fleetwood will be Lady Protectress!—or Lady Lambert, that detestable woman!

[She turns to open the door.]

Richard (still wearily). Or Lady Monk.¹

Dorothy. Lady Monk! That washerwoman!

[Exit, banging the door.]

Elizabeth. Ah! A good wife, no doubt, and godly, but—I would never have dared to bang the door when Oliver told me his wishes.

[Richard comes down and stands near her, leaning against the table.]

Elizabeth (after a short pause). Will you not send a messenger to your brother?

Richard. Harry?² He at least is loyal. But he fears that if he comes back from Ireland he will lose the army he commands there. Here is a letter from him: "I doubt the flood is so strong you can neither

¹ Monk was in command of the army in Scotland.

² Richard's younger brother, Henry, was in command of the army in Ireland.

QUEEN DICK

stem it nor come to an anchor, but must be content to go adrift, and expect the ebb."

[There is a sound at the door, and Daniel enters.]

Daniel. Master Dick—Your Highness, Colonel Howard would speak with you.

[Enter Colonel Howard and Colonel Ingoldsby.]

Howard. My Lord !

[He hesitates and looks at Elizabeth Cromwell.]

Richard. Well, Howard ?

Howard. My Lord—you are in danger. We beg you to take immediate action. The Lord General Fleetwood is false——

Richard. Stop ! General Fleetwood is my friend, and fought with my father——

Howard (impulsively). My Lord ! He is double-faced : he is gathering power and is secretly supported by Lambert ; I tell Your Highness plainly, 'tis gone so far that as well as your empire and command, your life is already in peril. You are Cromwell's son, and bear his name ; my Lord, show yourself worthy. A bold stroke and a good head, and if you will not be daunted, I will risk my life on the certainty of success. Fleetwood, Lambert, Desborough, Vane—these are the contrivers of mischief. We will be rid of them, give us but your authority to act on : 'tis too urgent to strain points of loyalty. Let us arrest them.

Ingoldsby. And I'm with you, Your Highness ! For the old times' sake, play the man !

[Richard hesitates, then turns towards them.]

Richard (wretchedly). I should be much troubled to injure anyone, even the least person in the nation, to preserve my own greatness ; already it is a burden to me. There has been blood enough shed, and misery enough.

Howard. But, Your Highness, while we wait and wait, our enemies and yours are acting. A sovereign has the right to protect himself and his realm by force

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when force is needed ; you have strength enough to act ; the Guards alone could seize their persons ; and I will lead and take the consequences if things go ill. But show hesitation, and our soldiers slip like sand through a glass—it will be too late in the day !

Richard. No ! No ! I will not force conflict. I would rather stand aside than cause more blood to be shed ; there have been wars enough, killings enough, miseries enough. I would stand down willingly rather than that, and let who may have the burden of it. Nor do I think matters gone as far as you say. I will see Thurloe—I will send for Fleetwood myself and question him.

Ingoldsby. Ah ! Old Noll¹ knew what a man of straw and bombast Fleetwood was, and knew how to deal with him ; with a few footmen and half a dozen Guards he dissolved Parliament and locked them out ; and when Fleetwood opposed him, he told him he was but a milksop, and he swore by the living God he would have his will.

[*Richard looks up and shakes his head.*

Richard. Thanks, Ingoldsby, I wish they were all like Howard and you.

Howard (curtly). We have done our duty by Your Highness.

[*They walk out stiffly, Ingoldsby saluting before he turns away.*

Richard (to himself). They are right ; my father would not have hesitated ; with a dozen dragoons at his back, he would have clapped them all in the Tower before night.

[*Elizabeth rises and stands beside him, supporting herself at the table.*

Elizabeth. Dick ! [Richard does not move.

Elizabeth (standing beside his chair). Remember, lad, when your father lay dying, he prayed, “ For Thy

¹ Oliver Cromwell.

QUEEN DICK

people, Lord, however Thou dispose of me, do good for them." [She waits a moment and then goes out.

Richard. I will see Charles Fleetwood myself ; my father loved him, and so have I loved him. (*He turns to escritoire and writes*) "Come to me at Whitehall without fail." (*Signs "Richard P."*) No, better be brotherly.

[Tears it up, writes again, and signs "Dick."

Richard (*goes to the door and calls*). Daniel, call Colonel Howard.

[A moment later Cornet Byrd enters.

Byrd. The Colonel is out riding, my Lord.

Richard. Cornet Byrd, take a company of the Guard and go to Wallingford House immediately with this message to General Fleetwood. Deliver it yourself and beg him to accompany you. If he will not come, you have my authority to bring him.

[Byrd takes letter, salutes, and goes out.

[Richard goes to the window. Sound of horse trotting away. He moves to door and calls.

Daniel, ask Mr. Thurloe to come here.

[Richard walks slowly across the room, stands a moment in thought, then sits in big chair as Thurloe enters.

Thurloe, they tell me things are going ill.

Thurloe. I have information, my Lord—indeed, things look ill, though perhaps not so ill as Your Highness says, but very ill. Orders have been issued for the Army to assemble at seven in the morning. There is little time for decision, but we must act quickly ; we must forestall them. Your brother in Ireland is too far away to help us ; Monk stays in Scotland and will not help us ; Lambert is sulking and Fleetwood——

Richard (*looks up*). They tell me Fleetwood is false and Lambert secretly in league with him.

Thurloe. Lambert is sulking in his great manor

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

house, but watching and waiting ; and Fleetwood sees his chance now of taking the place he swears your father meant for him. What your father gave them—offices, lands, mansions, governorships, and the like—have but whetted their appetites for all. Charles Fleetwood has not yet forgotten his meeting the French Ambassadors at Dover in his late Highness's time, when twenty-eight coaches, each drawn by six horses, followed his own, and an escort of two hundred cavalry with drawn swords gave him his little day of kingship. We must know more of their movements at Wallingford House, but they guard their secrets very cleverly there, and I have tried bribes in vain. (*He pauses and thinks ; then suddenly*) Is there not a gentlewoman to Lady Fleetwood ?

Richard (sharply). She shall be no spy ; I will not have her used.

Thurloe. No, Your Highness, but Colonel Norton is her friend, I think, and he has said——

Richard (passionately). No ! She shall not—— (*Quietly*) Forgive me, Jack, I cannot betray a friend ; the children love her—there are memories—we were friends before my father forced on me this unhappy marriage.¹ Had it been Rachel——

Thurloe (after a pause). Parliament is for us in the main ; if only they would finish their disputations ; money might say the last word—but there is no time.

[*Sounds of horses entering the courtyard.*]

Richard (looking up). I have sent a message to Fleetwood ; that must be his escort.

[*Enter Cornet Byrd.*]

Byrd (saluting). Your Highness, General Fleetwood sent back your order thus. (*He holds out his hand with the paper torn in pieces.*) I was refused admission ; the men would not go in ; they said they would defend

¹ The initiative came from his father, but Richard was very pleased at first.

QUEEN DICK

Your Highness with their lives, as was their duty, but would not lay hands on the General. (*He salutes and turns, then mutters.*) Sir, I did my best ; I could not force the men.

[*Richard paces to and fro, then goes to Byrd and puts a hand on his shoulder.*

Richard. Yes, Cornet Byrd, you could do no more.

Byrd (impulsively). I would die a hundred times for Your Highness.

CURTAIN

The curtain is lowered to denote the lapse of twelve hours ; when it rises it is 7 A.M.

[*Richard is standing at the window watching the assembly of troops in the courtyard ; sounds of orders being given, troops marching, horses, etc.*

[*Daniel enters.*

Daniel. Lady Fleetwood's gentlewoman is below and begs to see Your Highness at once, and will take no denial ; she bade me bring this to you.

[*He hands a small silver token, with ribbon attached.*

Richard. Tell the guard to admit her.

[*Exit Daniel.*

[*Richard stands looking at token, and reads to himself the words on it :*

"I love thee and dare not show it, you love me and——" (*Enter Rachel.*) Rachel ! Why, what is this distress ? And the hurry to-day of all days ?

[*He holds out his hand with the token in it.*

Rachel. My Lord—— [Covered with confusion.

Richard (shaking his head). Your Highness—though to-day it may be Dick again, as before this greatness. I am busy ; only this would have opened doors to you to-day. Do you remember the day you found this token in the tipsy-cake ? Fie, Rachel ! You dare not show it, yet you contradict yourself ; and I

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

am not free, yet it's good to know where love lies.
(*Speaking to himself*) To-day I may know friends and foes.

[*He gives her a chair.*]

Rachel. Your Highness, you are betrayed by your friends. General Fleetwood—even my lady——

[*Covers her face with her hands.*]

[*Richard waits for her to continue.*]

I was in the room when the message came. General Fleetwood threw it down and said, "There is no answer," but my lady picked it up and exclaimed, "The insolence!" She tore it up and threw the pieces on the salver and said to the servant, "There is the answer." Then she said, "Charles, play the man or you will be made a puppet. My brother is a fool and must be taught his place. He is not Oliver, nor ever will be." Afterwards I heard soldiers in the courtyard say, "His Highness is like to have some schooling to-morrow with My Lord for master." Another said, "Hacker is to hold Cheapside," and they had orders to be at St. James's at seven this morning.

Richard. I knew much of this already. I am well served by Thurloe and his creatures. So 'twas my sister tore my order and called me fool, and would have me know my place! And Charles Fleetwood, whom I trusted, is against me in his heart, and now openly. We knew that the Army is summoned to St. James's and I have ordered them here. A few are here already. (*He walks to the door and calls.*) Is Colonel Howard there?

[*Enter Colonel Howard.*]

Richard. Colonel Hacker has his men posted off Cheapside. Send and order them here. Are Colonel Gough's men come?

Howard. Your Highness, not yet.

Richard. Colonel Goodrich's?

Howard. They are here.

Richard. Ingoldsby's?

QUEEN DICK

Howard. Here, Your Highness, all but half a troop who refused to come and are at St. James's. He is furious, but they defied his orders and broke away.

Richard. Desborough's? No, not Desborough's, though he is my uncle. Falconberg's?

Howard. He is come, but scarcely two score men with him. It is near the hour. Will Your Highness go out to the regiments? [Richard gives no answer.

[Exit Howard.

Richard. Nearly all are at St. James's (*bitterly*). My own kinsfolk, my father's old comrades, the men who owe all they have to us! At least I have made them all show their true colours. Rachel, can one trust nobody? The Council are divided. Many are for me as a stopgap before bringing in Charles Stuart. Others would have me act as my father would have acted, but I will not fling England back into Civil War—no, I will not—anything but that. Bloodshed—friends killing friends—empty chairs and fatherless children—broken men begging in the street. No, no, I will not serve myself by that!

[He sinks in hopeless dejection in a chair with his head in his hands.

Rachel (*crosses and stands behind him*). My Lord! Dick! (*Puts a hand lightly on his shoulder.*) You are not friendless: indeed, you are not. And is not God your Friend?

Richard. I wish then He would tell me what to do. If I resist, the blood of men, who will be butchered before night, will be everlastingly upon me. If I yield to my enemies, who will not call me craven and hold me in contempt?

Rachel. Do you remember, when you and Betty were pleading with His Highness your father for the King's life, she said, "Fear is always behind cruelty. Oh, father, be great enough and brave enough to be kind." (*A pause.*) There may be more courage in

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submission than in fighting for your own. And, whatever you do, I shall understand, and I shall never call you craven.

[She bends down and kisses him lightly on the forehead.

He looks up quickly and their eyes meet.

Oh ! my Lord, my Lord, forgive me——

Richard. There is nothing to forgive, dear little friend. *(There is a knock at the door.)* I must go.

[He rises, goes to the door, and opens it. Colonel Howard stands there. He salutes, glances at Rachel, hesitates, and speaks.

Howard. Your Highness, it is the hour. You should show yourself to the men ; there is difficulty in holding them. Only eight regiments have held to Your Highness, and those only in part. Colonel Gough's men refused to follow him and have been drawn off to St. James's. Three troops of Ingoldsby's horse and part of two more have mutinied. Hacker says he has had his orders from Lord Fleetwood to stay by Cheapside, and he stays. Our troops are melting like snow. I think if Your Highness shows yourself and speaks to them——

Richard. I will, Howard. Do you go back to your men. At least my Guards are true.

Howard. And I hope may stay so ; there is much disorder. But I will shoot the first man——

Richard. No, no. What of Whalley's regiment ?

Howard. Firm, sir, to a man.

[He salutes and goes. Richard follows him with his eyes until the door shuts. A trumpet sounds.

Richard. Rachel, I must go to them. No, no, my life is in no danger, nor does it matter ; if they will not have me rule, few bear ill will. *[Exit.*

[Rachel goes to window and watches crowd anxiously. Voices outside cheering, calling "Your Highness," etc. ; then silence. Then Richard's voice :

QUEEN DICK

My friends, this is no time for fighting. Our country has need of peace ; there is need for tolerance and redressing of wrongs.

[Murmurs among the crowd, followed by footsteps hurrying away. Officers crying "Halt," and shouting hoarsely : then loud above the rest, "Your Highness, Your Highness."]

[Enter Richard. He walks across the room, and falls heavily into a chair. Howard enters.]

Howard. Sir, the Guards are breaking. Come, sir, mount a horse and among them. *(He goes to window and looks out.)* The loyal ones will stand by you, and Whalley's regiment stands firm. No, they are turning ! He is out of the saddle.

Whalley (voice off). Comrades, here I am, your old captain ; shoot me if you will no longer follow me !

Richard (rushing to the window). No ! If any man has ill will, here am I, Oliver's son and your Protector. If all my Army is to go, shoot me !

[Noise of troops moving away ; then Colonel Whalley enters, with Cornet Byrd behind.]

Whalley. Sir, it is finished ; only half a troop remains.

Howard. My Lord, mount and lead us ; there are ten score left of all arms. His Highness your father would have fronted an Army with these few. Take us to St. James's ! We will follow you. If it be to the death, 'tis only what comes to all. Are not three crowns worth a drawn sword ?

[Richard stands irresolute.]

Byrd. Sir, there is still the Parliament. There are still the Fleet, the City—— Indeed, sir, you have friends !

Richard. And enemies ! No, I will have no more wars. My Lord Whalley, thank your men for me and dismiss them. My Lord Howard, let the Guard be dismissed, except those that are for duty.

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[He takes leave of the three officers, each in turn, as they pass out, then shuts the door and turns to Rachel.]

Richard. Dear. There was a toast men drank during the wars : " To rusty swords and dirty Bibles." Some other man may make the sword bright, and red again with blood. I will not. For me men may thumb Bibles in peace and read them, too, in their own fashion. I would rather be a private gentleman a hundred times. *(As she rises from her chair.)* Good-bye, Rachel. I shall think to-night that one at least at Wallingford House knew me no coward for this. I hope my sister will not have missed you.

[She walks out quickly, and Richard comes down below the table, and stands listening to the sounds of soldiers marching, then silence. Door opens ; Rachel enters and looks on table.]

Rachel. I forgot—my token.

Richard. No. Ours now. Our token, Rachel. And it is my turn to keep it now. No, I shall not give it back. 'Tis no very dreadful secret, dear. But if I were free——

Rachel. If you were free, my Lord *(dropping on one knee and kissing his hand)*, I would follow you to the world's end. *(Stands.)* Though all were against you, Dick, and you lower than your meanest subject, yet would you be my prince.

[Turns, goes to door, faces him again for a moment, then goes.]

[He stands looking after her until door closes, then sinks into chair as CURTAIN falls.]

FOR FURTHER READING

Gwen John, " Mr. Clarke of England," in *Eight New One-Act Plays*, 4th series (Lovat Dickson).

R. W. Ramsey, *Richard Cromwell*.

QUEEN DICK

QUESTIONS

1. The representatives of hostile forces which overthrew "Queen Dick" are in the play all women. Do you think the author intends this to be significant?
2. "Fear is always behind cruelty." Find other examples in History.
3. What great English dramatists might we have lost if Richard Cromwell had established himself in power? Why?
4. What traces can you find in the play of the prevailing Puritanism in people's lives?

For Written Work

5. Does the play lose in dramatic effect because (1) Richard's real enemies—the army faction—do not appear? (2) His decision is a negative one?
6. Cromwell once quoted Ecclesiastes against the principle of hereditary power: "Who knoweth whether he may beget a fool or a wise man?" Which was Richard?
7. "The seeds of decay were in the Protectorate before his father's death." Discuss.
8. It has been said that in a happier age Richard might have made a good constitutional monarch. What qualities does he show in the play which justify this view?
9. If Richard had defied the army chiefs and fallen in battle would he have been nearer to your idea of a tragic hero?

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PRELUDE TO MASSACRE

Historical Incident in One Act

By EVAN JOHN

CHARACTERS

Colonel Hill.
Corporal Todd.
Lieutenant-Colonel Hamilton.
Captain Campbell of Glenlyon.
McIan Macdonald of Glencoe.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

All the characters in this play, with the exception of Todd, represent actual historical characters. An effort has been made to give a rough idea of their various attitudes towards the Glencoe Massacre—Hamilton (of whom little record survives) being treated as a mouthpiece for Stair's ideas.

There is only one serious departure from fact of which I am conscious. Neither Hamilton nor Glenlyon was at Inverlochy on the particular afternoon on which Macdonald of Glencoe came seeking to take the oath of submission.

PRELUDE TO MASSACRE

[The play is admirable as History in presenting the actual characters concerned and the atmosphere of intrigue and blood-thirsty treachery, only relieved by the well-meaning Hill. As a play it is full of dramatic conflict of principles and personalities; it is also full of dramatic irony in the light of the impending tragedy.]

The Scene is laid in the English fort at Inverlochy, subsequently known as Fort William.

The time is late afternoon, on Wednesday, the 28th of December 1691—three years after the deposition of King James and the coronation of William and Mary.

The Scene represents a small room in the fort, doing duty as a makeshift office. The décor should consist principally of packing-cases and military equipment.

The arrangement of the room and the stage movements of the actors must depend on the space available and the ingenuity of the producer. Those given in the stage directions are adapted from the plan of the original production (on one of the smallest stages in the United Kingdom). They can, no doubt, be improved.

Down L. is a fireplace; near it a chair. Up L., the only door. In the back wall, a window, looking out on snow and gloom. The rest of the wall is covered with notices, proclamations, and a rolled-up map of the Highlands. Up R. a cupboard or shelves for cards, wine and papers. R.C., a small table beneath a hanging lantern.

On a chair behind this table sits Corporal Todd, a plausible little Cockney. He is helping Colonel Hill on his R. to check the regimental accounts. Hill is sixty, jaded,

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occasionally sarcastic, but thoroughly likeable and good-natured.

Hill. Five, seven, nine. Four, two, four. Six, seven, six.

Todd. Seven and six.

Hill. Three, nineteen, two. Ten, ten, nought. One, one, nought.

Todd. One, one, nought, sir?

Hill. Yes. Fourth of September.

Todd. I've another ten guineas before that here. On the second.

Hill. Let me see. That's the second time that's happened. . . . Fetch me the small ledger; it's on the mantelpiece. . . . By the way, how far back does it go?

Todd (*fetching it*). This, sir? Four or five years, sir. Right back into King James's time.

Hill. H'm. I don't think we need to go as far back as that.

Todd. Seems to me as though there was a proper clutter in the accounts, sir, round about September. Of course, I wasn't in charge of the stores then. I was up at Inverness. It was when you were ill, sir.

Hill. Yes. No doubt the "clutter" was due to *your* absence from the scene. . . . No trace of a ten-guinea item here.

[*Enter Hamilton, Hill's second-in-command: younger, smarter and more self-satisfied. He stands removing his gloves and dusting his boots.*

Oh, is that you, Hamilton? Glad you're back. Have they sighted those reinforcements from Oban yet?

Hamilton. There's a wee party in sight, sir.

Hill. Well, I wasn't expecting a big one. Anything else to report?

Hamilton. No, sir. . . . Except that they say we'll be having some more snow to-night.

PRELUDE TO MASSACRE

Hill. Nothing new in that. . . . Are you doing anything at present?

Hamilton. No, sir.

Hill. Well, I wish you'd give me your help with these accounts, then. They're in a deuce of a muddle.

Hamilton (reluctant). Oh, accounts? I dinna ken that I . . . Oh, very well, sir. What is the trouble?

[*He sits behind the table, displacing Todd.*]

Todd. It really starts back here, sir, when me and the Colonel was away. We can't see . . .

Hamilton. Here, gi'e it to me. . . . Boots. . . . Hay. . . . More boots. I had thocht, sir, when I was sent to Inverlochy, that it would be for something mair important than counting up boots.

Hill (rising and crossing to the fire). Important? You wouldn't say that if you had to pay for everything that's missing out of your own pocket. . . . I've spent two hundred pounds this year on stores that Government ought to have provided, and I've no wish to add to that by having my accounts challenged.

Hamilton. Well, I'd begin by challenging that.

Todd. Which is that, sir?

Hill. Did you say there was more snow on the way? [*He strolls to the window.*]

Hamilton (to Todd). No, doon there, man.

Hill. What a country! What a climate!

Todd. Oh, that, sir! That was for His Majesty's birthday, drinking King William's health. The rum never come up from Glasgow, so the Colonel told me to run out and buy some whisky off of the natives. I didn't like to put it down plain and proper, because, you see . . .

Hamilton. Because you didna ken how to spell "whisky"? Is that it?

Todd. Well, sir, you must admit, it's a puzzling kind of a word. . . .

Hill. I suppose the roads will all be blocked be-

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tween here and Oban before to-morrow. I only hope our mail gets through first.

Hamilton. The mail, sir? There was one came through an hour ago, while I was out.

Hill. Why isn't it here, then? Corporal, run down and fetch me up the letters.

Todd. Very good, sir.

[Exit Todd. Hill comes back to the fire.]

Hamilton. There was only one for you, sir. From the Sheriff at Inverary, I think.

Hill. Ardkinglas? ¹ Nothing from London?

Hamilton. No, sir. I fear Mrs. Hill is less diligent in writing than yourself.

Hill. She has less time on her hands, in London. But was there nothing from Stair? ²

Hamilton. No, sir. . . . That is——

Hill. Well? Well?

Hamilton. Nothing for you, sir.

Hill. And what does that mean? I suppose he's written to you?

Hamilton. Yes, sir.

Hill. I see. . . . Not for the first time, I believe. I suppose I shall grow accustomed to being left without instructions while His Majesty's Secretary for Scotland corresponds with my subordinates.

Hamilton. My letter from Lord Stair was a purely personal one, sir. He is an acquaintance of my family.

Hill. So I believe. . . . Well, get on with those accounts.

[Re-enter Todd with a letter, which he hands to Hill before rejoining Hamilton at the table.]

Todd. Just the one, sir.

¹ Sir Colin Campbell of Ardkinglas, who was the nearest government representative qualified to receive the submission of the chiefs. They had been given until January 1, 1692, to take the oath of submission to William.

² John Dalrymple, Marquis of Stair, Secretary of State for Scotland.

PRELUDE TO MASSACRE

Hill. Thank you, Corporal. . . . Yes, this looks like Ardkinglas.

Todd (to Hamilton). You see, sir, I can't help thinking that someone got the receipts for the stables muddled up with the invoices for the men's mattresses. I suppose it's because there's straw in both.

Hamilton. Feeble, Corporal ; feeble. . . . You'd better check that second column.

Hill (reading). I don't like this, Hamilton.

Hamilton. What's that, sir ?

Hill. Report from Ardkinglas at Inverary. About the chiefs taking the oath of submission.

Hamilton. You mean, sir, about their not taking the oath of submission ?

Hill. What ? . . . Oh, yes. Ardkinglas says there are several that have not come in yet ; and there aren't many days now. I suppose it'll mean more fighting, curse it !

Hamilton. Glengarry's the only one that matters. Keppoch has taken the oath, and Appin and Glencoe are pretty small beer.

Hill. How do you know the names ?

Hamilton (momentarily disconcerted). The names, sir ? . . . Well, sir, I . . . It was only that Stair happened to mention in his letter that those three hadn't made submission yet.

Hill. I thought you said your letter from Stair was a purely personal one ?

Hamilton. Well, sir ?

Hill. I prefer to be told the truth by my subordinates.

Hamilton (rising in anger). What are you suggesting, sir ?

Hill (rising too, and walking away towards the window). Oh, nothing, man ; nothing. No good picking quarrels in a place like this. Heaven knows how long we may be cooped up in this damned bolt-hole ; and

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the sooner we learn to make allowances for each other the better. I suppose I ought to be grateful for a subordinate that can get inside information from Stair . . . and maybe pull a few strings when it's needed.

[*Hamilton has sat down again. Hill returns to the fire, to see that Todd has been watching the incipient quarrel in high glee.*]

And what the deuce are you grinning at, if I may ask?

Todd, I'm sure I'm sorry, sir. It was only something in these accounts.

Hill (*half to himself*). Liar. . . . Well, get on with them ! . . . Hamilton, I don't like this business at all. There are too many of the Chiefs refusing the oath of submission. I suppose they're still hankering for King James. The old story ! I wonder what Stair means to do about it.

Hamilton. I dare say he'll be glad of the opportunity.

Hill. Opportunity?

Hamilton. Ay. To make an example of one of them. After all, if they refuse to take the oath . . .

Hill. Do you mean an opportunity or an excuse?

Hamilton. You can call it what you like, sir, but it's the only way of dealing wi' these savages. They'll no' understand any other treatment.

Hill. Well, I hope it won't come to that. After all, they may come in. There's time yet.

Hamilton. Not much time now, sir. The New Year's the limit. What date is it, Corporal?

Todd. To-day, sir? Twenty-eighth of December, sir. Wednesday.

Hamilton. You see, sir. Two days more.

Hill. They may have taken the oath already, down in Inverary. We shouldn't hear about it for a day or two.

Hamilton. You may be right, sir. Trust them to stand oot till the last minute. Yon's the kind o' folly

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that passes for honour among Hielanders. I ken them.

Hill. Now, I wonder whether you do.

Hamilton. What's that, sir?

Hill. Oh, nothing, nothing. (*He walks to the wall, and unrolls a map of the Highlands.*) . . . Appin, Glengarry, Glencoe. Glencoe is the weakest of the three, and he's neighbour to . . . Hamilton?

Hamilton. Yes, sir?

Hill. Is Breadalbane¹ in London?

Hamilton. Ay, sir. . . . That is, I think he is.

Hill. Has he been talking to Stair?

Hamilton. How should I know, sir? I should never hear of it.

Hill. H'm. And wouldn't tell me if you did, I'll be bound.

Hamilton (rising). I only ken this, sir. If we show any kind of weakness in this matter, we'll be having the whole Hiellands oot for King James again. Maybe you're living in hopes of another rising?

Hill. Hopes? I'm living in hopes of nothing except a chance to see my own fireside in London again, with my wife and family round it. . . . And maybe a little of the money I've spent repaid me by a grateful Government.

Hamilton. Your ambitions seem pretty limited, sir.

Hill. So will yours be when you're my age. And you'll probably find them a deal easier to attain, what with friends in London and friends in Edinburgh. If I had half the pull you seem to have at headquarters, I wouldn't spend another day in the Highlands.

[*Todd has risen.*]

Hamilton. What is it, Corporal?

Todd. Something I wanted to show the Colonel, sir. I think I'm on the track of the trouble.

¹ John Campbell, Earl of Breadalbane, bears the greatest responsibility for the massacre, having suggested the details of the plan to Stair.

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Hamilton. Well, ye can juist show it to me. There's no need to worry the Colonel.

Hill. I think I'd better see it, Hamilton.

Todd (*bringing Hill some papers*). It's these two receipts, sir. I can't find anything in the ledger to correspond.

Hill. What are they for?

Todd. Seems to be extra powder, sir. Second and tenth of September. While you was ill, sir. I was away at the time, sir.

Hill. . . . Hamilton?

Hamilton. Yes, sir?

Hill. Why did you order all this gunpowder in September? I didn't authorise it.

Hamilton. No, sir. But I thocht we were needing it.

Hill. The devil you did! You know quite well we can't buy gunpowder up here without the whole Highlands hearing about it . . . and drawing conclusions.

Hamilton. I was in charge, sir, during your illness. I thocht it would be no bad thing for the Hielands to ken that we were in a position to strike when necessary. I wanted my garrison to be respected.

Hill. Your garrison? You were in command for a month at most.

Hamilton. I took my opportunity.

Hill. Good God, Hamilton, I've a mind to . . .

[*He remembers Todd.*]

Hamilton. Maybe you would like to discuss the matter at some other time.

Hill. It certainly needs discussing. . . . And not entered in the accounts, either. I shall want to know why you saw fit to conceal the purchase from me.

Hamilton. Whenever you please, sir.

[*A trumpet is heard outside.*]

Todd. I expect that'll be the reinforcement party

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from Oban, sir. Would you like me to go down and see?

Hill. I'd like you to get on with your work! (*He walks to the window.*) Yes, it is the Oban party. Looks like it. I wonder who's in charge.

Hamilton. I believe Glenlyon's bringing them up, sir.

Hill. Dammit, Hamilton, you seem to know twice as much about the arrangements here as I do! . . . And who the devil may Glenlyon be?

Hamilton. Campbell of Glenlyon, sir. The old Captain that paints.

Hill. Paints? Paints what?

Hamilton. Himself, sir. His face. He used to be something of a spark, I believe, back in King Charles's time, and he canna forget that some trull once called him handsome, God forgive her!

Hill. Oh, that creature? I suppose I must put up with what the Government sends me in the way of officers. But I've told them again and again I don't want Highlanders.

Hamilton. Set a thief to catch a thief, they say. And there's one thing about Glenlyon: he plays a damned good hand at Loo.¹ I dinna ken what we should do up here, if it wasna for the cards.

Hill. I've heard it said that he plays too good a hand . . . especially when there's money about. I don't know what the Service is coming to, these days. . . . Corporal, if I catch you grinning again, I'll have you flogged round the regiment! Run down and see who it is that's come with the reinforcements.

Todd. Very good, sir. (*He goes to the door and then turns back for a moment.*) No offence, sir.

Hill. Get out! [*Exit Todd.*]
Damn the man, I forgot he was here. We may not like having creatures like Glenlyon here, but I suppose

¹ A card game.

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we ought not to say so in front of the men. . . . By the way, Glenlyon married one of the Glencoe lot, didn't he ?

Hamilton. Oh, no, sir. It isna as close as that. It was only his cousin that married Glencoe's son.

Hill. Ah, I knew there was some connection. And I'm glad of it, too.

Hamilton. Why d'you say that, sir ?

Hill. Because I was beginning to fear that your friends in London were going to unsettle the whole Highlands by "making an example," as you call it, of Glencoe. I thought that was why they were sending these reinforcements. But I suppose I was doing them an injustice.

Hamilton. I dinna follow you, sir.

Hill. Then you're not as intelligent as I thought. If Glenlyon is a relative of Glencoe's, then Glencoe will welcome him there, Campbell or no Campbell—give him bed and board and music. Well, there isn't much a Government won't do, but they couldn't send a man to murder his own relations, or massacre a clan that's treating him as their guest. And even if they did order such a thing, well . . . [Re-enter Todd. Well, I'd like to see the man that would carry out such an order !

Todd. Captain Campbell of Glenlyon !

[Enter Glenlyon, cloaked and spurred. He is a Highland landlord who, after a life of dissipation in cities, has been forced to turn soldier for lack of money. The Edinburgh portrait shows him as a much younger man, but it explains much that would be otherwise inexplicable about the massacre of Glencoe.

Glenlyon. Sir, your most obedient . . . Good evening, Colonel Hamilton.

Hill (standing with his back to the fire). Evening, Glenlyon. Glad to see you here.

Glenlyon. The pleasure is entirely mine, sir.

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Hill. I trust you have had an uneventful march.

Glenlyon. Oh, yes, sir. Rather a dry one. There seem to be damned few inns between here and Oban nowadays.

Hamilton (at the table). Maybe we can remedy that, sir. Corporal, the claret!

Hill. I expect Captain Campbell would like to see his men to their quarters first.

Glenlyon. My men are not with me, sir. I couldn't get the brutes to march farther than Ballachulish. I rode on ahead to . . . to confer with you and Colonel Hamilton.

Hill. So I see. And what made you so anxious to get here?

Hamilton. I expect it was oor claret, sir. You canna get this kind of stuff in Ballachulish.

Glenlyon. I see my reputation has preceded me. I'd better plead guilty.

[*Hamilton has meanwhile taken the claret from Todd, and poured out three glasses. He hands two to Glenlyon, one to be passed on.*]

Hamilton. Colonel. *Glenlyon.* Can I gi'e you King William?

Hill. } King William!
Glenlyon. }

Hamilton. Oh, Corporal, clear away those papers. I take it you'll no' be going on wi' the accounts, sir?

Hill (crossing to the table). Well, I . . .

Glenlyon. Accounts? To the devil with accounts! I hope, now, Colonel, you won't be spoiling a good gentlemanly claret by mixing it with figures?

Hamilton. I'm sure it'd make a poor welcome for Glenlyon on his first evening at Inverlochy. Can we no' make up a party at Loo?

Glenlyon. So that's to be my first duty here? Well, ye'll not find me backward, if you've any cards—and any money to lose.

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Hamilton. Little enough of the second—— Cards, Corporal !—but always happy to lose what we have got.

Hill. Gentlemen, I think it's early yet for cards. I have . . .

Glenlyon. Oho, come, come, Colonel ! I'm sure you need a little distraction, to clear all those figures out of your head.

Hill (tempted). Well, I . . .

Hamilton. Just for once, sir. It's not often we have company. Here's for deal. . . . Shillings ?

Hill. Well, just this once, then.

[He sits on the right of the table. Hamilton is behind it, dealing out cards face upwards. Glenlyon unhitches his sword and sits to their left, counting out counters to represent the stakes.]

Hamilton. Knave. My deal, then.

[He shuffles, takes the cut from Hill, and deals out three hands of three cards apiece. The dialogue is never interrupted or delayed for the card-play.]

Hill. You'll have to fetch your men up to-morrow, Glenlyon. How many have you brought ? I've had no information.

Glenlyon. Hundred and twenty, sir. Two companies.

Hill. A hundred and twenty ! Dammit, man, I can't feed that number here. What the deuce is Government thinking of, sending 'em without notice ?

Glenlyon (leading). Government is watching events, sir. And events in the Highlands take a devilish deal of watching.

Hill. Oh. . . . Is that why they sent you ?

Glenlyon. Is that a compliment, sir, or do I suspect irony ?

Hill. Suspect what you like, sir. I only know I can't feed an extra company for more than a few days. You'll just have to march half of 'em back to Oban.

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Hamilton. Your turn, Colonel.

Hill. What? . . . Oh, yes.

[He plays, Hamilton follows, and taking the trick, plays again.]

Glenlyon. We're bringing a week's provisions with us, and after that . . . after that, we can rely on one of the clans for hospitality.

Hill (suspicious). Hospitality?

Glenlyon. We like to call it that. In England now, you'd be talking of quartering troops on . . . *(he has taken the trick and led again)* well, on those who differ from you in politics. But in the Highlands, we're all more or less kinsmen, and we prefer to call ourselves guests. . . . You're loosed, Colonel. A shilling in the pool.

[He has taken the last trick. He sweeps up the cards, shuffles, and deals out four hands, the last being the dummy, or "widow," which is needed after one player has been "loosed," i.e. failed to take a single trick.]

Hill. I may tell you, Glenlyon, I've known the Highlands for forty years. I was up here in Monk's¹ time. So it's no good your trying to blarney me with talk of your all being such a happy family.

Glenlyon. Tut-tut. Passing quarrels, passing quarrels. We have a way of robbing and murdering each other which breeds bad blood for the moment. But it's soon forgotten, I assure you. Widow, and it's a spade.

[He turns up a card to indicate trumps.]

Hill. Well, it's news to me. . . . I stand.

Hamilton. So do I.

Glenlyon. I take the widow.

[He exchanges his hand for that on the table.]

Hill (leading). My own experience tells me that you've got thundering long memories for an injury.

[He takes the trick and leads again.]

¹ See note on *Queen Dick*, p. 144.

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Glenlyon. I know that's our reputation, Colonel, but I can assure you it's quite undeserved. D'ye know what I saw a year ago? A Macdonald, a true-blue Macdonald, dining at Ardvorlich!

Hamilton. You'll have to explain that, Glenlyon. The Colonel won't know the story.

Hill. Why, what is the story?

Glenlyon. It was only what the Macdonalds would be doing at Ardvorlich. They had some grudge against the steward, there, came over one day and cut off his head. Then they knocked at his sister's house, sat down to table and demanded a meal. And when the lady comes back from the kitchen with some food, the first thing she sees on the table is a dish. . . . My trick, I think . . . a dish full of blood, with her brother's head grinning at her from the middle of it. She died a bad death, I believe. Raving mad, of course.

Hill. Good God! . . . Which Macdonalds were those?

Glenlyon. Oh, my cousins from Glencoe.

Hill. I'd never heard that story.

Hamilton. It's an old one, sir. A hundred years old. But they're aye savages. . . . Your deal, Colonel.

Hill. Is it? I'm sorry.

Glenlyon. I could tell you more recent ones, and nearer home for that matter. Take myself, for instance. Why do you think I've had to cram my old body into this damned uniform and grind my guts out for a few beggarly shillings a month? At my time of life, look you, when a man should be settling down to a snug old age! You know the answer, Hamilton, even if the Colonel doesn't.

[*Hamilton leads.*]

Hill. Why? What is the answer?

Glenlyon (*his passion, and his Highland accent, returning*

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as he proceeds). That's soon told. It is that those same Macdonalds of Glencoe would be coming back from the wars ¹ by way of Glenlyon, to sweep up my gear and spulzie my cattle. Beggared I was, beggared by that thieving cateran ² from Glencoe! And what does Government do about it? Down on its knees to the old impostor, begging and bribing him to take an oath of submission—while I starve my belly and break my old bones on the mountains. If I had my way——!

[Turning fiercely, he encounters a warning in Hamilton's face. A pause.

Hamilton. Your turn, Glenlyon.

Glenlyon (recovering). . . . What? . . . Oh, I beg pardon. What was I saying?

Hill (icily). You were telling us that Highlanders do not harbour grudges against one another.

Glenlyon (trying to recapture his jaunty style). Ah, yes. To be sure. I was only meaning that all I've suffered from Glencoe doesn't prevent us being friends and kinsmen. (Playing his cards without looking at them.) After all, my cousin's married to his son. And if Government were to quarter me on Glencoe, well, we should still talk of hospitality, even if it were the sheep he'd stolen from me that he gave me to eat.

Hamilton. My deal, I think. We've loosed you this time, Glenlyon.

Glenlyon. Yes, to be sure. It's always a mistake to talk . . . family matters when one's playing cards for money.

[Hamilton deals out four hands.

Hill. Have you been ordered to quarter on Glencoe?

Glenlyon. I've had no orders, sir, no definite orders. After all, we don't know yet which of the clans will have made submission and sworn the oath by the New Year.

¹ On their return from the Battle of Killiecrankie, 1689.

² Highland freebooter.

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Hill. Well, I hope Glencoe will have done so, if only for his own sake.

Glenlyon. We shall see. My cousin is always ready with a sword, but I've a notion he's a trifle slow when it comes to politics.

Hill. I take it that isn't true of your branch of the family?

Glenlyon. What? . . . Oh, no, Colonel. I think you have me there.

Hamilton. Do you stand, Glenlyon?

Glenlyon. No. I take the widow.

Hill. I stand.

Hamilton. Stand.

Glenlyon. How many play?

Hamilton. Three in.

Glenlyon. Flush.

[He shows his hand and scoops the pool; then he gathers up the cards to deal again.]

Hill. Your luck's coming back.

Glenlyon. It's time it did. I don't often allow people to loo me.

[As he deals, the trumpet is heard again outside.]

Hamilton goes to the window.

Hamilton. I wonder who that'll be.

Hill. That trumpet makes a damned ugly noise. I've a good mind to have it muted.

Glenlyon (dealing the next hand). Would you prefer the bagpipes, sir? I'm bringing a piper up from Oban.

Hill. No, thank you. I think not.

Glenlyon. I've dealt, Hamilton.

Hamilton (at the window). It looks like a party o' Hielanders.

Hill (expanding reminiscently to no one in particular). I remember when I was in Montserrat, we had a great buck negro for a trumpeter. . . .

Glenlyon. D'you know the tartan?

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[*A pause. Glenlyon takes the opportunity to have a good look at Hamilton's hand.*]

Hamilton. Looks like Macdonald.

[*Glenlyon stiffens, and goes to join Hamilton at the window. Hill is still somewhere in his past.*]

Hill. Yes, a damned great nigger. Stood six foot six in his socks. . . . Only he didn't wear socks.

Glenlyon. It's Glencoe.

Hamilton. Glencoe?

Hill (roused from reverie). Glencoe! . . . What the deuce? *Hamilton?*

Hamilton (returning to the table). Yes, sir?

Hill. Why is Glencoe here?

Hamilton. How should I ken that?

Hill. Then perhaps you'll tell me why Glencoe's name has been on your tongues—both of them—for the last ten minutes? Is this something that you two have been plotting with Stair?

Hamilton. Plotting, sir? That is an ugly word.

Hill. I fancy I'm on the track of an ugly thing. Why is Glencoe here?

Hamilton. As God is my judge, I do not know the answer to that question.

Glenlyon (suavely interposing). If you'll excuse the interruption, Colonel, may I suggest that he's come to tell us that he's been to Inverary and taken the oath of submission?

Hill. That is certainly an explanation, but I suspect that the answer to my question is not quite so simple.
[*Re-enter Todd.*]

Well, what is it?

Todd. Someone to see you, sir.

Hill. Is it Macdonald of Glencoe?

Todd. Yes, sir. . . . I think that was the name, sir.

Hill. Show him in.

Todd. Very good, sir.

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Hill. Glenlyon, your sword.

[*Exit Todd.* Glenlyon picks up his sword from the floor, and takes it and his chair up to the window. He then brings pen and papers to the table for Hill, and retires to the fireplace. Hamilton has meanwhile cleared away the cards, counters, and wine.

[*Enter the Macdonald of Glencoe, sixty years of age, tall and strong. He is a mixture of Viking chieftain and Old Testament prophet in appearance. He is unarmed, as prescribed by law, for this, his first visit to the Englishman's fort. His dress is shabby and travel-stained. He speaks with the slow, soft intonation of the Lochaber Highlander.*

[*Behind him (if cast permits) comes a follower in Macdonald tartan, who stands motionless in the door.*

Good evening, Glencoe.

Macdonald. Good evening. Is it Colonel Hill that I am seeing?

Hill. At your service, sir.

Macdonald. *Faillte*,¹ Glenlyon. . . . Good evening, sir.

Hill. Lieutenant-Colonel Hamilton, my second in command.

Macdonald. It is an honour.

Hill. Will you sit down?

[*Hamilton offers a chair, but Macdonald declines it.*

Macdonald. Thank you, Colonel Hill. But I would rather be standing until we have done what we must do.

Hill. How can I help you?

Macdonald. It is to take the oath that I am come, the oath of peace with your Government.

Hill. The oath? Surely you know that I can't administer it here? Have you not been to Inverary?

¹ Pronounced *faul-t-yeh*, greetings.

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Macdonald. I have not.

Hill. Then you must go at once. You have only two days to get there.

Macdonald. Two days? It is many miles to Inverary. If there is more snow coming, it is not in two days that I would be there to take the oath. It is here in your fortress that I would be taking it.

Hill. But I've just told you I have no power to administer it. The proclamation distinctly said a civil officer, a Sheriff or his deputed. You must go to Ardkinglas at Inverary.

Macdonald. It is to a soldier that I would be wishing to swear it. And I am telling you that I cannot reach Inverary in two days, with more snow coming while I am on the road.

Hill. Then why in Heaven's name have you left it so late? I'm damned if you don't deserve all that's coming to you. I've never known anything like the folly and stubbornness of you people. I've spent the best years of my life trying to introduce a little common sense into the Highlands, and you seem determined to prove to me that the best years of my life have been wasted.

Macdonald (slow and quiet). It is not stubborn nor foolish that I have been whatever. I have read your proclamation, long ago I have read it. And I have sent to France to ask if I may take this oath, and make peace with your government. It is a long journey to France, and the answer is not swift in coming.

Hill. France? And what has France got to do with it?

Macdonald. It is in France that my King is living. I would not be swearing any oath at all, and he not giving me leave.

Hill. So that's it? Your King? Glencoe, you know as well as I do that you've no business to take

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Srinagar.

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the oath of submission unless you've made up your mind to renounce King James.

Macdonald. It is not soon that I would be doing the like of that. I would be swearing an oath to keep the peace and obey the orders of your government, if it is for quietness in Scotland. But first I must ask leave of my King.

Hill. Look here, Glencoe, am I mad or are you? Do you mean to tell me that you've delayed coming to King William's fort to take the oath to King William, until you'd asked leave of a Pretender in Paris.

Macdonald (slowly and quietly, his dignity quite unruffled). It is not I that am mad, nor you neither. Mine is a small clan, look you, and we have many hungry enemies on every side. There are Campbells in Glenorchy, there are Campbells in Breadalbane. If Glenlyon that is standing there were not my friend and kinsman, then Glencoe would be like a sheep-fold where there is a wolf waiting at every door. Perhaps it is for that that our fathers would be calling it the Glen of Weeping. . . . It is to keep my people from the wolves that I would swear this oath. And my King has consented that we should swear and not perish.

[He turns away towards the window. A short pause.]

Hamilton. You see what you're dealing with, Colonel. I tellt you they were disloyal to the core. If only you'd listen to the advice of a Scotsman that kens these people——

Hill. If only you'd hold your tongue for a minute, I might be able to decide what to do.

Hamilton. But, sir——!

Hill. I told you to hold your tongue!

[Hamilton turns away in exasperation, and encounters Macdonald.]

Macdonald. I do not know what you would be meaning to call me unloyal. I am thinking that there are four men in this room, and that there is not one of

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them that did not swear loyalty to King James, when he was living in his palace of London. I am thinking that now he is an exile and a beggar in the palaces of others there is but one of the four that would be mindful of his oath. Yet it is not many years since they all swore faith to him, before ever there was a Dutch William in England.

Hill. Yes, yes, yes. But that isn't the point at issue. I'm more concerned about your own position. As you say, you have more than enough enemies—some of them of your own making—and they're only waiting for an excuse. I'm wondering what I can do about it.

Glenlyon. I don't wish to be troublesome, Colonel, but I'd like to suggest that we are in no position to do anything, except send Glencoe on to Inverary. We cannot help it if he arrives a little late . . . though we might perhaps add a prayer that it does not snow to-night.

Hill. It must be a long time, Glenlyon, since you put up a prayer for anyone except yourself.

Glenlyon. It's a long time, Colonel, since I put up a prayer of any sort. I lost the habit in youth, and I cannot say I have been greatly troubled by the loss.

[*Hamilton comes forward impatiently.*]

Hamilton. I canna see what prayers have to do wi' it. The proclamation was quite positive, and I agree wi' Glenlyon that it's no' oor business to amend it.

Hill. Thank you, Mr. Hamilton. I think I could have guessed your opinion without your troubling to state it. I would remind you that I am in command here, and the decision rests with me.

Hamilton. It does . . . for the present.

Hill. Hamilton. Is that a threat?

Hamilton. You can take it so if you please.

Hill. I shall take it as it is intended, and deal with it as I think fit. . . . Glencoe!

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Macdonald. Colonel Hill.

Hill. Glencoe, you must know by now that you've put yourself in a damned ugly position. I know you for a fool, I'm more than half convinced that you're a humbug, and God knows why I should go out of my way to help you. All the same, if you'll follow me downstairs, I'll have a letter made out for you to take to Ardkinglas at Inverary, asking him to administer the oath to you, even if you are late in getting there. I'll suggest that he makes you out a certificate, and asks the Edinburgh Office to accept it——

[Hamilton and Glenlyon both start forward in protest, but Hamilton is the nearer.]

Hamilton. But, Colonel——

Hill (exploding). And, by God, Hamilton, if I have any more interruption from you, I'll tell Ardkinglas to alter the date on the certificates, and send it through to Edinburgh without a word !

[He glares Hamilton into silence, and turns to Macdonald.]

Be off with you now, Glencoe. I'll get the letter made out while you're getting ready. You haven't a moment to waste.

Macdonald. It is not often that I would be thanking an Englishman, and he wearing King William's uniform. But I will do what you tell me, and I will make sure that your name is not forgotten among us, so long as there will be Macdonalds living in Glencoe. *(He looks coldly at Glenlyon.)* *Beannachd leibh,*¹ Glenlyon. *(He speaks to Hamilton over his shoulder, making for the door.)* Good evening to you, Colonel Hamilton.

[Exit Macdonald, followed by his clansman. Hill walks to the shelves to get a paper. Glenlyon and Hamilton look at each other. Hill goes to the door.]

Hamilton. Colonel Hill.

¹ Pronounced *be-yannacht klyev*, goodbye.

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Hill (turning back). Sir ?

Hamilton. I trust you didna mean what you said to that man ?

Hill. Sir, I trust I say nothing without meaning it.

Hamilton. Even about altering the date ?

Hill (hedging). That . . . that is my affair.

Hamilton. You know that I am in direct communication with Stair ? That it is my duty to inform him of any attempt to defeat his purposes in the Hiellands ?

Hill. What does that mean ?

Hamilton. Stair wishes to crush disaffection in the Hiellands by making an example. That is his policy. He is awaiting an opportunity to carry it oot.

Hill. And if I do not agree with it ?

Hamilton. I do not think you will be able to hinder its execution, and I am sure you would be very unwise to try.

Hill. Unwise ?

Hamilton. . . . Colonel Hill, you have often complained that Government owes you a great deal of money. I've heard it said that it also owes you a knighthood and a pension. In both these matters, the decision rests with Stair.

Hill. Mr. Hamilton, I am not accustomed to being blackmailed by my subordinates.

Hamilton. I am merely telling you how matters stand.

Hill. I think I know how they stand. If Glencoe is a day or two late in taking this oath, Stair wants to make it an excuse for a measure that would destroy all that I have given my life to building up in this country. He wants to quarter troops on Glencoe, and then loose that hound there ! on a clan of decent, innocent folk. You tell me I can do nothing to prevent it ; but there is one thing I can do. I can make it perfectly clear that when it is a question of

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murder, I myself am not among the accomplices !
. . . Now, will you please show Captain Campbell to his quarters ? I shall not be dining in mess to-night.

[*Exit Colonel Hill. Glenlyon strolls to the shelves, and fetches a glass and the bottle of claret.*

Glenlyon. I am sorry for Glencoe, especially if it snows to-night. But I take it that King William intended his proclamation to be enforced. [*He drinks.*

Hamilton (sitting at the table). It's a painful business ; but civilisation will never make any headway in the Hiellands until these savages are thoroughly cowed.

Glenlyon (quizzically). Civilisation ? Now, I'd never thought of the matter in that light. (*He goes back to the shelves and fetches another wineglass.*) I hope, by the way, that Stair's orders are explicit. Some busybody is bound to demand an inquiry afterwards, and I shouldn't like it said that I'd exceeded my instructions.

[*He pours out a glass of wine for Hamilton, and a second for himself. Hamilton is taking a letter from his pocket.*

Hamilton. I think you can set your mind at rest. I have a letter from Stair here. . . . Let me see.
“ . . . all the severity that can be used.”

Glenlyon. I see. I wonder now, would that include their women and children ?

Hamilton (still scanning the letter). Yes. He mentions that. Anyway, they could hardly survive this weather when you've burnt a' the hooses. . . . Ah, this is what I was looking for. “ I assure you their powers shall be full enough, and I hope the soldiers will not trouble the Government with prisoners.”

Glenlyon. “ Will not trouble the Government with prisoners.” Stair has a neat pen. Have some claret ?

Hamilton. No more, thanks.

[*Glenlyon strolls to the window and picks up his sword. He stands looking out.*

PRELUDE TO MASSACRE

Of course, you realise that all this is purely provisional. I mean, if Glencoe should manage to get to Inverary and take the oath before Friday. . . .

Glenlyon. Oh, of course, of course. . . . There's Hill packing him off¹ through the main gate. (*A pause.*) Hamilton?

Hamilton. Yes?

Glenlyon (*coming back into the room*). It's beginning to snow already. I think we shall have a heavy fall.

[*With a sharp and unexpected movement, he jerks his sword out of the scabbard. Then he stands playfully fiddling with the point.*]

CURTAIN

FOR FURTHER READING

Buchan, *The Massacre of Glencoe*.

Cunningham, *The Loyal Clans*.

Gilfillan, Campbell, and Blackie, *The Massacre of Glencoe*. (Says all that can be said for the murderers and prints the actual list of booty "spulzied from the Laird of Glenlyon" by the Macdonalds on their way home from Killiecrankie.)

QUESTIONS

1. Find instances of Hill's successes in repartee.
2. Find remarks which are full of dramatic irony in the light of subsequent events.
3. What were the causes of opposition to William III in the Highlands?
4. Can you think of any reason why the Lowlander (Hamilton) speaks in a more pronounced Scots accent than the Highlanders?

¹ Actually Hill persuaded him to stay for food and rest and he departed early next morning.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

For Written Work

5. "Civilisation will never make any headway in the Hielands until these savages are utterly cowed." How far does this remark justify English policy in Scotland?

6. Can you account for the fact that the English government could always find Scotsmen to carry out repressive measures?

7. "I trust I say nothing without meaning it." Write a study of Hill's character by expanding this remark.

8. Examine the dramatic significance of the card game in the play.

9. In Byron's *Vision of Judgment* George III presents himself at the gate of Heaven, but is only admitted after an inquiry into his record on earth. Imagine William III in a similar predicament, and write the speeches for and against him on the matter of the Glencoe Massacre.

CAMPBELL OF KILMOHR

By J. A. FERGUSON

CHARACTERS

Mary Stewart.
Morag Cameron.
Dugald Stewart.
Captain Sandeman.
Archibald Campbell.
James Mackenzie.

CAMPBELL OF KILMOHR

[This play depicts the kind of incident which must have frequently occurred after the rebellion of 1745. The details and the characters are imaginary, though typical; the author has based the character of Archibald Campbell on that of a real person, Campbell of Glenfalloch, who after the '45 displayed much the same temper and ruthless brutality against the Jacobites in Argyll and North Perthshire.

The play is immensely valuable in helping the reader of History to see and feel as a vivid experience the events which are passed over in a few dispassionate sentences of the History book. As dramatic literature, too, it is one of the outstanding one-act tragedies of our time.

The following is a quotation from the author's note to the play in *Eight Modern Plays* (Nelson): "Out of the conflict between the two ('Archibald Campbell, a typical eighteenth-century Edinburgh lawyer,' and Mary Stewart) comes the tragedy. About that tragedy two things should be carefully noted. First, that Mary Stewart has no sense of defeat, and, second, that Campbell's triumph is far more apparent than real. But the first is much the more important in production. Indeed, it is by revealing Mary Stewart's glory in her sacrifice that the play is lifted into the realm of true tragedy. And any failure to make her sense of triumph manifest in her last speech will reduce the play to melodrama, and make it what is called a 'sad' play. Tragedy, it must be observed, is never sad or depressing when it shows us the human spirit in some moment of grandeur. On the contrary, it thrills us; and by revealing some particular strength in our common human nature in some imaginary conflict, fortifies us for our own real if smaller distresses."]

SCENE.—*Interior of a lonely cottage on the road from Struan to Rannoch in North Perthshire.*

TIME.—*After the Rising of '45.*

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Morag is restlessly moving backwards and forwards. The old woman is seated on a low stool beside the peat fire in the centre of the floor.

The room is scantily furnished and the women are poorly clad. Morag is barefooted. At the back is the door that leads to the outside. On the left of the door is a small window. On the right side of the room there is a door that opens into a barn. Morag stands for a moment at the window, looking out.

Morag. It is the wild night outside.

Mary Stewart. Is the snow still coming down?

Morag. It is that then—dancing and swirling with the wind too, and never stopping at all. Aye, and so black I cannot see the other side of the road.

Mary Stewart. That is good.

[Morag moves across the floor and stops irresolutely. She is restless, expectant.]

Morag. Will I be putting the light in the window?

Mary Stewart. Why should you be doing that? You have not heard his call (*turns eagerly*), have you?

Morag (with sign of head). No, but the light in the window would show him all is well.

Mary Stewart. It would not then! The light was to be put there *after* we had heard the signal.

Morag. But on a night like this he may have been calling for long and we never hear him.

Mary Stewart. Do not be so anxious, Morag. Keep to what he says. Put more peat on the fire now and sit down.

Morag (with increasing excitement). I canna, I canna! There is that in me that tells me something is going to befall us this night. Oh, that wind, hear to it, sobbing round the house as if it brought some poor lost soul up to the door, and we refusing it shelter.

Mary Stewart. Do not be fretting yourself like that. Do as I bid you. Put more peats to the fire.

CAMPBELL OF KILMOHR

Morag (at the wicker peat-basket). Never since I . . .
What was that? [*Both listen for a moment.*]

Mary Stewart. It was just the wind; it is rising more. A sore night for them that are out in the heather. [*Morag puts peat on the fire without speaking.*]

Mary Stewart. Did you notice were there many people going by to-day?

Morag. No. After daybreak the redcoats came by from Struan; and there was no more till nine, when an old man like the Catechist from Killichonan passed. At four o'clock, just when the dark was falling, a horseman with a lad holding to the stirrup, and running fast, went by towards Rannoch.

Mary Stewart. But no more redcoats?

Morag (shaking her head). The road has been as quiet as the hills, and they as quiet as the grave. Do you think he will come?

Mary Stewart. Is it you think I have the gift,¹ girl, that you ask me that? All I know is that it is five days since he was here for meat and drink for himself and for the others—five days and five nights, mind you; and little enough he took away; and those in hiding no' used to sore lying I'll be thinking. He must try to get through to-night. But that quietness, with no one to be seen from daylight till dark, I do not like it, Morag. They must know something. They must be watching.

[*A sound is heard by both women. They stand listening.*]

Mary Stewart. Haste you with the light, Morag.

Morag. But it came from the back of the house—from the hillside.

Mary Stewart. Do as I tell you. The other side may be watched.

[*A candle is lit and placed in the window. Girl goes hurrying to the door.*]

¹ The gift of seeing the future.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Mary Stewart. Stop, stop! Would you be opening the door with a light like that shining from the house? A man would be seen against it in the doorway for a mile. And who knows what eyes may be watching? Put out the light now and cover the fire.

[Room is reduced to semi-darkness, and the door unbarred. Some one enters.]

Morag. You are cold, Dugald!

[Stewart, very exhausted, signs assent.]

Morag. And wet, oh, wet through and through!

Stewart. Erricht Brig was guarded, well guarded. I had to win across the water.

[The old woman has now relit candle and taken away plaid from fire.]

Mary Stewart. Erricht Brig—then——

Stewart (nods). Yes—in a corrie,¹ on the far side of Dearig, half-way up.

Mary Stewart. Himself is there then?

Stewart. Aye, and Keppoch as well, and another and a greater is with them.

Mary Stewart. Wheest! *[Glances at Morag.]*

Stewart. Mother, is it that you can . . .

Mary Stewart. Yes, yes, Morag will bring out the food for ye to carry back. It is under the hay in the barn, well hid. Morag will bring it. Go, Morag, and bring it.

[Morag enters other room or barn which opens on right.]

Stewart. Mother, I wonder at ye; Morag would never tell—never.

Mary Stewart. Morag is only a lass yet. She has never been tried. And who knows what she might be made to tell.

Stewart. Well, well, it is no matter, for I was telling you where I left them, but not where I am to find them.

¹ A hollow in a rocky hillside.

CAMPBELL OF KILMOHR

Mary Stewart. They are not where you said now ?

Stewart. No ; they left the corrie last night, and I am to find them (*whispers*) in a quiet part on Rannoch Moor.

Mary Stewart. It is well for a young lass not to be knowing. Do not tell her.

Stewart. Well, well, I will not tell her. Then she cannot tell where they are even if she wanted to.

[*He sits down at table ; the old woman ministers to his wants.*]

Stewart. A fire is a merry thing on a night like this ; and a roof over the head is a great comfort.

Mary Stewart. Ye'll no' can stop the night ?

Stewart. No. I must be many a mile from here before the day breaks on Ben Dearig.

[*Morag re-enters.*]

Morag. It was hard to get through, Dugald ?

Stewart. You may say that. I came down Erricht for three miles, and then when I reached low country I had to take to walking in the burns¹ because of the snow that shows a man's steps and tells who he is to them that can read ; and there's plenty can do that abroad, God knows.

Morag. But none spied ye ?

Stewart. Who can tell ? Before dark came, from far up on the slopes of Dearig I saw soldiers down below ; and away towards Rannoch Moor they were scattered all over the country like black flies on a white sheet. A wild-cat or anything that couldna fly could never have got through. And men at every brig and ford and pass ! I had to strike away up across the slopes again ; and even so as I turned round the bend beyond Kilrain I ran straight into a sentry sheltering behind a great rock. But after that it was easy going.

Morag. How could that be ?

Stewart. Well, you see, I took the boots off him, and

¹ Streams.

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then I had no need to mind who might see my steps in the snow.

Morag. You took the boots off him !

Stewart (laughing). I did that same. Does that puzzle your bonny head ? How does a lad take the boots off a redcoat ? Find out the answer, my lass, while I will be finishing my meat.

Morag. Maybe he was asleep ?

Stewart. Asleep ! Asleep ! Well, well, he sleeps sound enough now, with the ten toes of him pointed to the sky.

[The old woman has taken up dirk from table. She puts it down again. Morag sees the action, and pushes dirk away so that it rolls off the table and drops to the floor. She hides her face in her hands.]

Mary Stewart. Morag, bring in the kebbuck o' cheese. Now that all is well and safe it is we that will look after his comfort to-night. (*Morag goes into barn.*) I mind well her mother saying to me—it was one day in the black winter that she died, when the frost took the land in its grip and the birds fell stiff from the trees, and the deer came down and put their noses to the door—I mind well her saying just before she died——

[Loud knocking at the door.]

A Voice. In the King's name ! *[Both rise, startled.]*

Mary Stewart (recovering first). The hay in the barn—quick, my son. *[Knocking continues.]*

A Voice. Open in the King's name !

[Stewart snatches up such articles as would reveal his presence and hurries into barn. He overlooks dirk on floor. The old woman goes towards door, slowly, to gain time.]

Mary Stewart. Who is there ? What do you want ?

A Voice. Open, open.

[Mary Stewart opens door, and Campbell of Kilmohr follows Captain Sandeman into the

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house. Behind Kilmohr comes a man carrying a leather wallet, James Mackenzie, his clerk. The rear is brought up by soldiers carrying arms.

Sandeman. Ha, the bird has flown.

Campbell (who has struck dirk with his foot and picked it up). But the nest is warm ; look at this.

Sandeman. It seems as if we had disturbed him at supper. Search the house, men.

Mary Stewart. I'm just a lonely old woman. You have been misguided. I was getting through my supper.

Campbell (holding up dirk). And this was your tooth-pick, eh ? Na ! na ! We ken whaur we are, and wha we want, and, by Cruachan, I think we've got him.

[Sounds are heard from barn, and soldiers return with Morag. She has stayed in hiding from fear, and she still holds the cheese in her hands.]

Sandeman. What have we here !

Campbell. A lass !

Mary Stewart. It's just my dead brother's daughter. She was getting me the cheese, as you can see.

Campbell. On men, again : the other turtle-doo will no' be far away. (*Bantering, to the old woman.*) Tut, tut, Mistress Stewart, and do ye have her wait upon ye while your leddyship dines alane ! A grand way to treat your dead brother's daughter ; fie, fie, upon ye !

[Soldiers reappear with Stewart whose arms are pinioned.]

Campbell. Did I no' tell ye ! And this, Mrs. Stewart, will be your dead sister's son, I'm thinking ; or aiblins ¹ your leddyship's butler ! Weel, woman, I'll tell ye this : Pharaoh spared ae butler,² but Erchie Campbell will no spare anither. Na ! na ! Pharaoh's case is no' to be taken as forming ony preceedent. And so if he doesna answer certain

¹ Perhaps.

² See Genesis xl.

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questions we have to speir ¹ at him, before morning he'll hang as high as Haman.²

[*Stewart is placed before the table at which Campbell has seated himself. Two soldiers guard Stewart. Another is behind Campbell's chair and another is by the door. The clerk, Mackenzie, is seated at up corner of table. Sandeman stands by the fire.*

Campbell (to *Stewart*). Weel, sir, it is within the cognisance of the law that you have knowledge and information of the place of harbour and concealment used by certain persons who are in a state of proscription.³ Furthermore, it is known that four days ago certain other proscribed persons did join with these, and that they are banded together in an endeavour to secure the escape from these dominions of His Majesty, King George, of certain persons who by their crimes and treasons lie open to the capital charge. What say ye? [*Stewart makes no reply.*

Campbell. Ye admit this then?

[*Stewart as before.*

Campbell. Come, come, my lad. Ye stand in great jeopardy. Great affairs of state lie behind this which are beyond your simple understanding. Speak up, and it will be the better for ye.

[*Stewart silent as before.*

Campbell. Look you. I'll be frank with you. No harm will befall you this night (and I wish all in this house to note my words)—no harm will befall you this night if you supply the information required.

[*Stewart as before.*

Campbell (with sudden passion). Sandeman, put your sword to the carcass o' this muckle ⁴ ass and see will it louse his tongue. [*Sandeman does not move.*

Stewart. It may be as well then, Mr. Campbell, that

¹ Ask.

² Esther vii.

³ Proscribed, outlawed.

⁴ Great.

I should say a word to save your breath. It is this : Till you talk Rannoch Loch to the top of Schiehallion ye'll no' talk me into a yea or nay.

Campbell (quietly). Say ye so ? Noo, I wadna be so very sure if I were you. I've had a lairge experience o' life, and speaking out of it I would say that only fools and the dead never change their minds.

Stewart (quietly too). Then you'll be adding to your experience to-night, Mr. Campbell, and you'll have something to put on to the other side of it.

Campbell (tapping his snuff-box). Very possibly, young sir, but what I would present for your consideration is this : While ye may be prepared to keep your mouth shut under the condition of a fool, are ye equally prepared to do so in the condition of a dead man ?

[*Campbell waits expectantly. Stewart silent as before.*]

Campbell. Tut, tut, now if it's afraid ye are, my lad, with my hand on my heart and on my word as a gentleman . . .

Stewart. Afraid !

[*He spits in contempt towards Campbell.*]

Campbell (enraged). Ye damned stubborn Hieland stot¹ . . . (*To Sandeman.*) Have him taken out. We'll get it another way.

[*Campbell rises. Stewart is moved into barn by soldiers, who remain with him.*]

Campbell (walking). Some puling eediots, Sandeman, would applaud this contumacy and call it constancy. Constancy ! Now, I've had a lairge experience o' life, and I never saw yet a sensible man insensible to the touch of yellow metal. If there may be such a man, it is demonstrable that he is no sensible man. Fideelity ! quotha, it's sheer obstinacy. They just see that ye want something oot o' them, and

¹ Bullock.

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they're so damned selfish and thrawn¹ they winna pairt.² And with the natural inabeelity o' their brains to hold mair than one idea at a time, they canna see that in return you could put something into their palms far more profitable. (*Sits again at table.*) Aweel, bring Mistress Stewart up.

[*Old woman is placed before him where son had been.*

Campbell (*more ingratiatingly*). Weel noo, Mistress Stewart, good woman, this is a sair predeecament for ye to be in. I would jist counsel ye to be candid. Doubtless yer mind is a' in a swirl. Ye kenna³ what way to turn. Maybe ye are like the Psalmist and say : " I lookit this way and that, and there was no man to peety me, or to have compassion upon my fatherless children." But, see now, ye would be wrong ; and, if ye tell me a' ye ken, I'll stand freends wi' ye. Put your trust in Erchie Campbell.

Mary Stewart. I trust no Campbell.

Campbell. Weel, weel, noo, I'm no' jist that set up wi' them myself. There's but ae Campbell⁴ that I care muckle aboot, after a'. But, good wife, it's no' the Campbells we're trying the noo ; so, as time presses, we'll jist *birze yont*,⁵ as they say themselves. Noo then, speak up. [*Mary Stewart is silent.*

Campbell (*beginning grimly and, passing through astonishment, expostulation, and a feigned contempt for mother and pity for son, to a pretence of sadness which, except at the end, makes his words come haltingly*). Ah ! ye also. I suppose ye understand, woman, how it will go wi' your son ? (*To his clerk.*) Here's a fine mother for ye, James ! Would you believe it ? She kens what would save her son—the very babe she nursed at her breast ; but will she save him ? Na ! na ! Sir, he may look after himself ! A mother, a mother ! Ha ! ha !

¹ Perverse.

² Give.

³ Know not.

⁴ Only one Campbell.

⁵ Press forward.

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[Campbell *laughs*. Mackenzie *titters foolishly*.

Campbell *pauses to watch effect of his words*.

Aye, you would think, James, that she would remember the time when he was but little and afraid of all the terrors that walk in darkness, and how he looked up to her as to a tower of safety, and would run to her with outstretched hands, hiding his face from his fear, in her gown. The darkness ! It is the dark night and a long journey before him now.

[*He pauses again*.

You would think, James, that she would mind how she happit ¹ him from the cold of winter and sheltered him from the summer heats, and, when he began to find his footing, how she had an eye on a' the beasts of the field, and on the water and the fire that were become her enemies. And to what purpose all this care ?—tell me that, my man, to what good, if she is to leave him at the last to dangle from a tree at the end of a hempen rope—to see his flesh to be meat for the fowls of the air—her son, her little son !

Mary Stewart (softly). My son—my little son ! . . .

Oh, (*more loudly*) but my son he has done no crime.

Campbell. Has he no' ? Weel, mistress, as ye'll no' take my word for it, maybe ye'll list to Mr. Mackenzie here. What say ye, James ?

Mackenzie. He is guilty of aiding and abetting in the concealment of proscribed persons ; likewise with being found in the possession of arms, contrary to statute, both very heinous crimes.

Campbell. Very well said, James ! Forby,² between ourselves, Mrs. Stewart, the young man in my opeenion is guilty of another crime (*snuffs*)—he is guilty of the heinous crime of not knowing on which side his bread is buttered. Come now. . . .

Mary Stewart. Ye durst not lay a finger on the lad, ye durst not hang him.

¹ Covered.

² Besides.

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Mackenzie. And why should the gentleman not hang him if it pleases him?

[*Campbell taps snuff-box and takes pinch.*]

Mary Stewart (with intensity). Campbell of Kilmohr, lay but one finger on Dugald Stewart and the weight of Ben Cruachan will be light to the weight that will be laid on your soul. I will lay the curse of the seven rings upon your life. I will call up the fires of Ephron, the blue and the green and the grey fires, for the destruction of your soul. I will curse you in your homestead and in the wife it shelters, and in the children that will never bear your name. Yea and ye shall be cursed.

Campbell (startled, betrays agitation—the snuff is spilt from his trembling hand). Hoot toot, woman! ye're, ye're . . . (*Angrily.*) Ye auld beldame, to say such things to me! I'll have ye first whippit and syne droont¹ for a witch. Damn thae stubborn and supersteetious cattle! (*To Sandeman.*) We should have come in here before him and listened in the barn, Sandeman!

Sandeman (in quick staccato, always cool). Ah, listen behind the door you mean! Now I never thought of that!

Campbell. Did ye not! Humph! Well, no doubt there are a good many things in the universe that yet wait for your thought upon them. What would be your objections, now?

Sandeman. There are two objections, Kilmohr, that you would understand.

Campbell. Name them.

Sandeman. Well, in the first place, we have not wings like crows to fly . . . and the footsteps on the snow. . . . Second point: the woman would have told him we were there.

¹ Then drowned.

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Campbell. Not if I told her I had the power to clap her in Inverness jail.

Mary Stewart (in contempt). Yes, even if ye had told me ye had power to clap me in hell, Mr. Campbell.

Campbell. Lift me that screeching Jezebel oot o' here ; Sandeman, we'll mak' a quick finish o' this. (*Soldiers take her towards the barn.*) No, not there, pitch the old girzie ¹ into the snow.

Mary Stewart (as she is led outside). Ye'll never find him, Campbell, never, never !

Campbell (enraged). Find him, aye, by God I'll find him, if I have to keek under every stone on the mountains from the Boar of Badenoch to the Sow of Athole. (*Old woman and soldiers go outside, leaving only Campbell, Mackenzie, Sandeman, and Morag in the room ; Morag huddled up on stool.*) And now, Captain Sandeman, you an' me must have a word or two. I noted your objection to listening ahint ² doors and so on. Now, I make a' necessary allowances for youth and the grand and magneeficent ideas commonly held, for a little while, in that period. I had them myself. But, man, gin ³ ye had trod the floor of the Parliament Hoose in Edinburry as long as I did, wi' a pair o' thin hands at the bottom o' toom ⁴ pockets, ye'd ha'e shed your fine notions, as I did. Noo, fine pernickety nonsense will no' do in this business——

Sandeman. Sir !

Campbell. Softly, softly, Captain Sandeman, and hear till what I have to say. I have noticed with regret several things in your remarks and bearing which are displeasing to me. I would say just one word in your ear ; it is this : These things, Sandeman, are not conducive to advancement in His Majesty's service.

Sandeman (after a brief pause in which the two eye each

¹ Noisy woman.

² Behind.

³ If.

⁴ Empty.

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other). Kilmohr, I am a soldier, and if I speak out my mind you must pardon me if my words are blunt : I do not like this work, but I *loathe* your methods.

Campbell. Mislike the methods you may, but the work ye must do ! Methods are my business. Let me tell you the true position. In ae word it is no more and no less than this. You and me are baith here to carry out the proveesions of the Act for the Pacification of the Highlands. That means the cleaning up of a very big mess, Sandeman, a very big mess. Now, what is your special office in this work ? I'll tell ye, man ; you and your men are just beesoms¹ in the hands of the law-officers of the Crown. In this district, I order and ye soop.² (*He indicates door of barn.*) Now soop, Captain Sandeman.

Sandeman. What are you after ? I would give something to see into your mind.

Campbell. Ne'er fash³ about my mind : what has a soldier to do with ony mental operations ? It's His Grace's orders that concern you. Oot wi' your man and set him up against the wa'.

Sandeman. Kilmohr, it is murder—murder, Kilmohr !

Campbell. Hoots awa', man, it's a thing o' nae special signeefficence.

Sandeman. I must ask you for a warrant.

Campbell. Quick, then : Mackenzie will bring it out to you.

[Clerk begins writing as Sandeman goes and orders the soldiers to lead Stewart outside. Campbell sits very still and thoughtful. Clerk finishes writing and places warrant before Campbell for his signature.]

Mackenzie. At this place, sir.

Campbell (again alert). Hoots, I was forgetting.

¹ Brooms.

² Sweep.

³ Worry.

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Mackenzie. It is a great power ye have in your hands, Kilmohr, to be able to send a man to death on the nod, as ye might say.

Campbell (sitting back, pen in hand). Power ! power say ye ? Man, do ye no' see I've been beaten. Do ye no' see that ? Archibald Campbell and a' his men and his money are less to them than the wind blowing in their faces.

Mackenzie. Well, it's a strange thing that.

Campbell (throwing down the pen and rising). Aye, it's a strange thing that. It's a thing fit to sicken a man against the notion that there are probabilities on this earth. . . . Ye see, James, beforehand I would have said nothing could be easier.

Mackenzie. Than to get them to tell ?

Campbell. Aye, just that. But you heard what he said : " You'll be adding to your experience this night, Mr. Campbell, and you'll have something to put to the other side of it," says he. (*Paces away, hands behind back.*) Aye, and I have added something to it, a thing I like but little. (*Turning to face Mackenzie with raised hand.*) Do you see what it is, James ? A dream can be stronger than a strong man armed. Just a whispered word, a pointed finger even, would ha'e tell'd us a'. But no ! no ! And so I am powerless before the visions and dreams of an old woman and a half-grown lad.

Mackenzie (who now stands waiting for the warrant). No' exactly powerless, Kilmohr, for if ye canna open his mouth ye can shut it ; and there's some satisfaction in that.

Campbell (sitting down to sign warrant). No' to me, man, no' to me. (*He hands the paper to Mackenzie, who goes out.*) For I've been beaten. Aye, the pair o' them have beat me, though it's only a matter o' seconds till one o' them be dead.

Morag (her voice coming quickly, in a sharp whisper, like

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an echo of Campbell's last word as she sits up to stare at him). Dead !

Campbell (startled). What is that ?

Morag (slowly). Is he dead ?

Campbell (aloud). Oh, it's you. I'd forgotten you were there.

Morag (in same tone). Is he dead ?

Campbell (grimly). Not yet. But if ye'll look through this window preeently ye'll see him gotten ready for death.

[He picks up hat, gloves, cloak, and is about to go out.

Morag (after a pause, very slowly and brokenly). I—will—tell—you.

Campbell (astounded). What !

Morag. I will tell you all you are seeking to know.

Campbell (in a whisper, thunderstruck). God, and to think, to think I was on the very act . . . on the very act of . . . (Recovering.) Tell me—tell me at once.

Morag. You will promise that he will not be hanged ?

Campbell. He will not. I swear it.

Morag. You will give him back to me ?

Campbell. I will give him back—unhung.

Morag. Then (Campbell comes near), in a corrie half-way up the far side of Dearig—God save me !

Campbell (in exultation). Dished after a'. I've clean dished them ! Loard, Loard ! (With intense solemnity, clasping hands and looking upwards.) Once more I can believe in the rationality of Thy world. (Gathers up again his cloak, hat, etc.) And to think . . . to think . . . I was on the very act of going away like a beaten dog !

Morag. He is safe from hanging now ?

Campbell (chuckles and looks out at window before replying, and is at door when he speaks). Very near it, very near it. Listen !

[He holds up his hand—a volley of musketry is heard.

CAMPBELL OF KILMOHR

Kilmohr goes out, leaving door wide open. After a short interval of silence, the old woman enters and advances a few steps towards the girl, who has sunk on her knees at the volley.

Mary Stewart. Did you hear, Morag Cameron, did you hear?

[The girl is sobbing, her face covered by her hands.]

Mary Stewart. Och! be quiet now. I would be listening till the last sound of it passes into the great hills and over all the wide world. . . . It is fitting for you to be crying, a child that cannot understand, but water shall never wet eye of mine for Dugald Stewart. Last night I was but the mother of a lad that herded sheep on the Athole hills: this morn it is I that am the mother of a man who is among the great ones of the earth. All over the land they will be telling of Dugald Stewart. Mothers will teach their children to be men by him. High will his name be with the teller of fine tales. . . . The great men came, they came in their pride, terrible like the storm they were, and cunning with the words of guile were they. Death was with them. . . . He was but a lad, a young lad, with great length of days before him, and the grandeur of the world. But he put it all from him. "Speak," said they, "speak, and life and great riches will be for yourself." But he said no word at all! Loud was the swelling of their wrath! Let the heart of you rejoice, Morag Cameron, for the snow is red with his blood. There are things greater than death. Let them that are children shed the tears. . . .

[She comes forward and lays her hand on the girl's shoulder.]

Mary Stewart. Let us go and lift him into the house, and not be leaving him lie out there alone.

CURTAIN

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

FOR FURTHER READING

J. A. Ferguson, *Dalgarney goes North* (Collins). (A novel with the same historical background and much the same characters as the play.)

John Buchan, "The Escape of Prince Charles Edward," in *A Book of Escapes and Hurried Journeys*.

QUESTIONS

1. "I've clean dished them," says Campbell. What line in the play shows that he was wrong after all?

2. What is the dramatic purpose of Sandeman?

3. Find instances of (1) irony and (2) vivid metaphor in Campbell's lines.

4. "A dream can be stronger than a strong man armed." Mention other such dreams in history.

5. Dugald speaks of "another and a greater." To whom is he referring?

For Written Work

6. Examine carefully the language of the play and estimate the extent of its contribution to the play's success.

7. Carefully describe the character of Campbell, pointing out which speeches lead you to suppose that he had a sensitive imagination.

8. Why do you think this is considered to be one of the finest one-act tragedies in existence?

9. Give an account of the 1745 rebellion and the Young Pretender's escape.

10. Compare the activities of Campbell of Kilmohr and Campbell of Glenlyon in *Prelude to Massacre*.

BEFORE TRAFALGAR

A Play

By JAMES LANSDALE HODSON

CHARACTERS

Nelson.

Captain Hardy.

Lord Collingwood.

Sir Edward Berry.

Captain Blackwood.

Sir Robert Calder.

Others of Nelson's Captains.

BEFORE TRAFALGAR

[*Before Trafalgar* presents in dramatic form some of the actual events of Nelson's last days. The plan of attack is based on a written memorandum which Nelson explained orally on board his ship some days before the battle, and much of the dialogue here and elsewhere contains his actual words. The incident with Sir Robert Calder is based on letters, which establish its truth to History, but it really happened earlier, for Calder sailed for England a week before the battle. The signing of the codicil took place on the morning of the battle.

This play is valuable as History because it gives a good impression of the qualities in Nelson which made him so successful in winning the devotion of his men, not only among the officers, but also among the seamen. The extent of this devotion may be seen from a seaman's letter :—

“ Our dear Admiral Nelson is killed ; so we have paid pretty sharply for licking 'em. I never set eyes on him, for which I am both sorry and glad ; for, to be sure, I shd. like to have seen him—but then, all the men in our ship who have seen him are such soft toads, they have done nothing but blast their eyes and cry since he was killed. God bless you ! chaps that fought like the devil sit down and cry like a wench.”

Dramatically, the situation gains point throughout by our knowledge that Nelson will win the battle but lose his life. Several speeches acquire significance in the light of this, and the whole scene is the more interesting for being the presentation of a man's last hours—and that man a national hero. The scene between Nelson and Calder has in a high degree the quality which makes a play successful on the stage.]

SCENE.—Nelson's cabin in the “*Victory*.”

TIME.—October 20, 1805. About seven o'clock on the evening before Trafalgar.

Library Sri Pratap College,
Srinagar.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

The lamps are lit but a certain amount of light—it is a fine night—comes through the cabin windows.

Nelson's table is on the L. and it would be well if the scene were set diagonally so that Nelson, at his table, faces the bottom R. corner of the stage. The cabin windows would run slantwise down on Nelson's R. When Collingwood and Nelson's Captains come on the stage such three or four of them as are visible occupy the bottom R. corner near the footlights, and the impression should be conveyed that there are a dozen more ranked behind them.

The cabin is low in the roof yet high enough for officers to stand upright, although Captain Hardy's head when he enters is within a hair's-breadth of the ceiling and he has a tendency to stoop. Behind Nelson's chair a portrait of Lady Hamilton¹ is hung on the wall.

Nelson is writing with his left hand. He is alone. On the table at his elbow is a basin of cold water. After a few moments, he pauses in his writing to bathe his eyes.

Nelson is in full dress and wearing his orders. He is, however, as will be seen shortly, in his stockinged feet.

As Nelson wipes his eyes with a cambric handkerchief, Captain Hardy² enters down R., eyebrows black and thick, cheeks heavy, mouth firm but kindly—an enormous, calm, generous-hearted man.

Captain Hardy stands waiting.

Nelson. Ah, Hardy. Are they here?

Hardy. All but Collingwood, my lord.

Nelson. Collingwood, eh? He may be last now, but he'll be first in the fight—after us, Hardy—first after us.

Hardy. Is the eye better, sir?

Nelson. Yes—a good deal. You remember that

¹ Nelson's friendship with Sir William Hamilton (British Ambassador at Naples, 1764–1800; died 1803), and his devotion to Lady Hamilton, had a very great influence on his life.

² Thomas Hardy came of the same family.

Fleet Surgeon who said I should go blind in both eyes unless I lived in a dim room, took no wine, and the rest of it? Well, I shall cheat *him*, Hardy.

[*Nelson rises, lifts the sheet of paper, looks at it, purses his lips, places the paper down, puts a finger on it and looks at Hardy.*]

Something I want you and Blackwood to witness for me, Hardy—a codicil.¹

Hardy (*inclining his head*). You mean after you have addressed the Captains, sir?

Nelson. Yes, afterwards. After I have seen Calder, too. Is he waiting?

Hardy. Not yet, sir. I told him seven-fifteen.

Nelson. Good. I could wish that business of his were over. The wind keeps light, eh?

Hardy. Yes, sir, thank God.

Nelson. Amen. (*Whimsically.*) I've fought enough battles half seasick.

Hardy. You've no doubt they'll fight then, sir?

Nelson. I believe so. They wouldn't have left harbour otherwise. What would *you* call a victory, Hardy?

Hardy. Since they're disposed to fight, sir, and land is nearer than I like, fourteen ships captured or sunk would be a fine result, sir.²

Nelson. No, no, it must be annihilation. Annihilation! Ah, Hardy, the two or three Frenchmen who are serving in this ship will have a tale for their children. [*Nelson takes a pace or two, to and fro.*]

Hardy (*noticing Nelson has no shoes on*). Would you like your shoes, sir?

Nelson (*lost in thought*). Eh?

Hardy (*pointing to Nelson's feet*). Shoes, sir?

Nelson. Oh, no, no. They'll soon dry. I was caught in that shower.

¹ An addition to a will.

² It was actually Blackwood who said this.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Hardy. You can't afford to catch a chill, sir, on top of——

Nelson. Oh, no, I'm all right. I believe I shall finish my task, Hardy. We are all used for an end. (*Pause.*) I believe that.

Hardy. But you make your own way to it, sir. What of the occasion at Copenhagen¹ when you put up the telescope and said you couldn't see the signal to stop fighting? [*He beams.*

Nelson. Shall I tell you a secret, Hardy? (*He stops before Hardy and looks up at him and says with an impish air.*) A bit of play-acting. We had arranged before the battle, Sir Hyde Parker and I—what a stupid man he was—that I was to use my discretion. If he were to fly a signal to cease fire I was to observe it or not as I chose.

Hardy (dryly). He knew you would please yourself in any case, sir. You disobeyed first, in my belief, and received authority afterwards—as you usually do.

Nelson. Don't trap me, Hardy, don't trap me. And who authorised you, by the way, on that same occasion, to row round the Danish flagship at night, taking soundings with a long pole, eh?

Hardy. Well, sir, you knew I should do it.

[*Nelson has turned and is staring at the picture of Lady Hamilton. He turns back to Hardy.*

Nelson. Is Mrs. Hardy well?

Hardy. Thank you, sir, yes.

Nelson. How's the boy?

Hardy. Worrying his mother as to how soon he's to go to sea.

Nelson. Sinews of England—they spring firm as ever; a rough knotted breed. An arrow like myself now and then and an oak like you. (*He looks him up and down.*) The oak stands and the arrow flies.

¹ The famous occasion when Nelson put his telescope to his blind eye so as to avoid seeing Parker's signal to cease fire.

(*Suddenly.*) Did I tell you about the Forest of Dean? I visited it, you know. It would grow nine hundred and twenty thousand oak trees, enough for five hundred, seventy-four gun ships. But they cut and cut and plant not half enough. Hogs eat the acorns and sheep the tender young shoots. Damn it, you'd think ships were made of iron the way they neglect our oak.

Hardy (smiling). Perhaps one day they will be, sir.

Nelson. As well talk of giving us wings and flying. A pretty question for us if ships flew in the sky and we had to plan attacks not only from north, south, east or west, but from above and below also. Eh? Eh? We should need Hamilton's mathematics to help us.

[*There is a pause.*]

Hardy. It was sad, his dying.

Nelson. He was a great age—seventy-three. Which of us will see much more than half his years? I am forty-six—forty-six years—worn out by the sea and fretting when in harbour. How many more, I wonder?

[*He walks to the window, opens it and listens to the sea lapping against the stern. Bosuns' pipes are heard, thin and shrill.*]

Hardy. That will be Lord Collingwood, my lord.

Nelson (looking at his watch). It wants three minutes to the time. Good. To-morrow our guns must be double- and treble-shotted, Hardy. (*He paces to and fro.*) I envy you one thing—your son.

Hardy. There is time yet, my lord. Long years of peace——

Nelson (pondering). I wonder. (*Suddenly.*) Now where the devil did Tom put my shoes? (*He looks about him.*) Ah! (*He sees them and sits to put them on.*) Bring Collingwood and the others in.

Hardy. Yes, sir.

[*Nelson pulls on his shoes and takes his seat at his table once more. His face becomes composed, and*

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

both face and figure take on weight and authority. He is in high spirits, confident. There is a noise of approaching footsteps and a subdued murmur. This fades as Lord Collingwood, Sir Edward Berry and Blackwood appear on the edge of the stage.

[Captain Hardy stands on the far edge of the group and up the stage. Collingwood is fifty-five, bald in front, heavy-jowled; Sir Edward Berry is a fiery short man, low-browed, bushy eyebrows; Blackwood is a thick-set, dark man with side-whiskers, a bulldog of a man.]

[Nelson rises but remains at his table.]

Nelson. Ah, Coll. Evening, Sir Ed'ard. Evening, Blackwood, Miller, Troubridge——

[He nods to them and speaks their names. A murmur of greetings in reply, accompanied by bows.]

(With a half smile.) First of all, gentlemen, I must compliment you on the close observance of my wish that the *Victory* should join you without any demonstration. The less Mr. Villeneuve knows of my whereabouts the better. *(His tone becomes graver.)* You are aware, gentlemen, of what lies before us—an engagement that must be decisive. It is our task to destroy the Spanish and French fleets and thus compel peace.

[A murmur of approval moves over the semi-circle.] It has been represented to me that Buonaparte may have turned his eyes away from England for the time being, and that Villeneuve will make for Toulon, there to give support to the passage of troops for Italy.¹ *(Very deliberately.)* It does not matter whither he is bound. He will not arrive. You, gentlemen, will see to that. The honour and glory of our country depend upon it, and possibly its safety and that of Europe. It has long been my conviction that a battle is worth

¹ This idea was correct in the main.

fighting so long as sufficient damage is inflicted on the enemy. Widespread destruction must be counted higher than a brilliant tactical victory. In the battle that lies before us nothing short of annihilation will content me. How is it to be achieved? On Captain Blackwood's frigates I rely to keep the enemy under constant surveillance. [Blackwood *nods his head jerkily*. Between the frigates and myself will be posted at intervals other fast-sailing cruisers which, by means of signals, including lamps and the firing of guns, will keep me informed without delay of Mr. Villeneuve's movements. More precise details of those vessels and signals will be afforded you. If the two fleets are willing to fight, little manœuvring is necessary, the less the better. But with thick weather, as must be expected, and variable winds, it will be almost impossible to bring a fleet of thirty sail into a line of battle without such a loss of time as would place a decisive result in doubt. Therefore the British fleet will be split: the order of sailing will be the order of battle. I shall place the fleet in two lines, each of fifteen ships, with an advanced squadron of eight of the fastest sailing two-decked vessels. You, Collingwood, second in command—(Collingwood *inclines his head in acknowledgment*)—will have the entire direction of your line to make your attack and follow it up. Lord Collingwood will cut the enemy line about twelfth ship from the rear. I shall cut it at its centre, and our advanced squadron will pierce it three or four ships ahead of me. The capture or destruction of their Commander-in-Chief must be a first step. Villeneuve destroyed, chaos in some measure must follow. The whole principal idea of our plan is to overwhelm the enemy from a point three or four ships ahead of Villeneuve to their rearmost vessel. I shall suppose their twenty leading ships to be untouched in the first instance, but it must inevitably be some time

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

before they can perform a manœuvre to succour their ships in jeopardy, or to attack us.

[*A murmur of approval.*
Something must be left to chance. Nothing is sure in a sea fight above all others. Shot will carry away the masts and yards of friends, as well as foes. But I look with confidence to a victory before the enemy van can succour its rear. Should the enemy close, I have no fears as to the result. Captains will look to their particular line as their rallying-point, but in case signals can neither be seen nor perfectly understood (*very deliberately*), no captain can go far wrong if he places his ship alongside that of an enemy and proceeds to board and take it.

[*Nelson pauses and looks round his officers.*
Collingwood. Sir, it must succeed.

Blackwood (who talks in jerks). If only they will—allow us—to get at 'em.

Hardy. It is simple, sir, but it is masterly. The Nelson touch.

[*There is a murmur of approbation and repetition of the phrase, "the Nelson touch."*

Sir Edward Berry. Sir, I am taking my courage in both hands in saying this : you spoke, my lord, of our silencing the enemy's Commander-in-Chief. They will attempt the same stroke. Once Villeneuve knows you are here, he will strive after your destruction, as we after his. I appeal to your lordship, do not make the *Victory* bear the brunt.

Nelson (dryly). Sir Ed'ard, when your *Agamemnon* hove in view to-day¹—the ship, you will remember, I captained in '93—I knew we were sure of a good fight. You must not try to keep all of it to yourself, you know.

¹ He actually arrived a week before the battle, whereupon Nelson exclaimed : "Here comes Berry ! Now we shall have a battle !" He was the only officer present who had been with Nelson at both the Nile and Copenhagen battles.

BEFORE TRAFALGAR

Sir Edward Berry. My lord, I——

Nelson (stopping him). I know, I know. We have boarded too many ships together in the old days. (*Ending the talk.*) You will take a glass of wine, gentlemen, next door. [*Exeunt several of the officers. (In the chatter that ensues, and as they move out Nelson turns to Hardy and says :)* Bring Sir Robert Calder to me, and then look after them. [*Captain Hardy goes off.*]

Collingwood (staying a moment). I never heard even you put anything clearer or a better plan outlined.

Nelson (putting his hand on his arm). My dear Coll, having you at the head of the second line robs me of half my anxiety. I owe you a great deal already. I shall owe you more soon.

[*Captain Hardy returns with Sir Robert Calder, and Collingwood, seeing him at the door, goes, bowing to him stiffly as he passes him.*

[*Exit Collingwood.*

Hardy. Sir Robert Calder, my lord.

Nelson (who has taken a pace or two, to and fro). Ah, Calder. . . . [*Hardy withdraws.*

Calder (with a Scottish accent). You requested my presence, my lord.

Nelson. Yes, I have a message to deliver from their Lordships at the Admiralty. I wish it were a pleasanter business. (*More harshly, to get it over.*) They desire you to return, to answer certain questions concerning your action off Finisterre in July and the enemy's escape into Vigo Bay.¹

¹ He had been in charge of the blockade of Ferrol, near Finisterre, when he had been ordered to engage Villeneuve's fleet, which was moving towards the Channel. He did so on July 22, 1805, and, although he captured two old ships and was thus able to claim a victory, the result was indecisive. His own fleet was so scattered that he declined a renewal of the combat next day and drew off, pursued half-heartedly by Villeneuve. Eventually Villeneuve joined forces with the squadron hitherto blockaded in Ferrol, a move which Calder should have prevented. In the subsequent inquiry Calder was severely reprimanded.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Calder. An inquiry?

Nelson. I'm afraid so.

Calder. I wish nothing better. I did my duty.

Nelson. I am sure you did.

Calder. You'd think I was beaten, the way Barham¹ is handling me.

Nelson. He is being pressed by Parliament and by popular clamour.

Calder. I captured two o' Villeneuve's ships and lost none of my ain.

Nelson (dryly). Their Lordships grow greedy and relentless. And those who have never fired a shot nor ridden a storm out are the worst. It is always so. I have a brother—a clergyman—a surprising man, I assure you, for a man of God——

Calder. Will you allow me, my lord, to take home such officers as will prove there was no opportunity of re-establishing contact with the enemy after they broke from the fight?

Nelson (grunts). Very difficult, Calder. You know what's in front of us. Every man is important.

Calder (bitterly). Except my own services. Why order me home *now*?

Nelson. I know. To have you with my fleet, commanding your *Prince of Wales* with her ninety guns—that would suit me admirably. (*He pauses in thought.*) But if their Lordships demand your return, it is fair that your case should be supported. (*Pause. Then, with decision.*) I will consent to such officers accompanying you, Calder, as is reasonable. Whom do you want?

Calder. Captain Stokes, Flag-Lieutenant Barker and Lieutenant Jackson.

Nelson. Very well. They shall go with you—although it may not meet with Barham's approval.

Calder. You are kind, my lord.

¹ First Lord of the Admiralty.

BEFORE TRAFALGAR

Nelson (dryly). Acting on one's own initiative is not always approved of. Do you remember St. Vincent, when, as Jervis's Captain of the Fleet, you would have had me reprimanded? ¹

Calder (without flinching). I should have done my duty as I saw it, my lord. I have always done that.

Nelson. I know and I honour you for it; but there are times when strict duty is not enough—when the right course must be taken at risk of one's career. Your career or mine, Calder—what are they if England survives?

Calder. A man's honour and career are bound up. I feel my position acutely, my lord.

Nelson. I know. I have made Barham aware of my own opinion of your case. It may do you service. There are those who have ventured to say that in your situation at Finisterre I should have fared better, won a greater success. I have discountenanced that suggestion. (*Pause.*) I will arrange for the *Dreadnought* frigate to take you and the officers you name back to Spithead.

Calder (dismayed). A frigate? I was hoping, my lord, that I might sail in my own *Prince of Wales*.

Nelson (curtly). It is asking too much. She has ninety guns.

Calder. I am a Vice-Admiral, my lord, and entitled to the honours due to me—until I may be deprived of them.

Nelson (warmly). Your dignity and mine, Calder, are important only so long as they are of service to

¹ At this battle (1797) Nelson scored a great success when he disregarded an order from Jervis, his superior officer. Calder then criticised Nelson's "unauthorised departure from the method of attack prescribed by the admiral," but Jervis replied: "If ever you commit such a breach of your orders I will forgive you also." Nelson wrote of Calder at the time of his disgrace: "If ever he has been my enemy, he now feels the pang of it, and now finds me one of his best friends."

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

England. I have twenty-nine ships of the line. Villeneuve has thirty-three—most of them more heavily gunned. If I acceded to your request, it is possible I should be endangering England's position.

Calder. It is my firm belief, my lord, that you will win as decisively with twenty-eight ships as with twenty-nine. [*Nelson makes a gesture of mild rebuke.* My lord, you see me in a desperate position. I am going home to face a trial—perhaps extremity.

Nelson (moved). No, no ; you exaggerate.

Calder. They shot Admiral Byng,¹ my lord. (*In a low voice.*) It is in my mind that they may shoot me also. You and I have confronted death many times, my lord . . . but the disgrace of it in this fashion. (*He turns away to hide his emotion. Then he pulls himself together.*) I am sorry, sir.

[*Nelson paces to and fro ; then stops.*

Nelson. I am distressed, Calder. I know you are a brave man and a conscientious officer. It troubles me that, after doing what you conceived to be your duty, you should find yourself in this predicament. (*He paces again.*) I know how you feel. They once offered me the *Seahorse* frigate to go home in from Naples.² I refused. But the circumstances are not the same. (*He ponders.*) Nevertheless . . . (*He ponders again, and paces to and fro. Then with great energy.*) You shall have your flagship, Calder. (*More gently.*) I am strangely moved by your position and by what lies in front of me. I know that what I am doing is not strictly defensible, and that I shall incur displeasure. However (*dryly*), it will not be for the first time.

¹ Shot in 1757 for not having done his best in an action off Minorca in 1756. Voltaire said that they shot him "pour encourager les autres" !

² Owing to ill-health, growing unpopularity, and friction with his superior officer, Lord Keith, Nelson asked leave to return to England from the Mediterranean in 1800. Keith refused him his flagship.

BEFORE TRAFALGAR

Calder. I am deeply grateful, my lord. When do you wish me to sail?

Nelson. For your sake it were better you went quickly.

Calder. I will go to-night.

Nelson. As you wish.

Calder. I shall not forget what you are doing, my lord—if I live to remember it.

Nelson. We cannot spare you, Calder. Their Lordships know that. You will be winning victories—after I have ceased to win them.

Calder. I pray God not. I wish you a great victory, my lord, and your health afterwards.

Nelson. Thank you, Calder.

[He shakes hands with Calder and walks to the window and looks out.]

Calder. Good night, my lord.

Nelson (without turning). Good night.

[Exit Calder.]

[After a moment Nelson opens the window to listen.]

We hear a faint chirruping. He calls.

Hardy! (*Eagerly.*) Hardy! *[Enter Hardy.]*

(*His face lit up.*) Can you hear it?

Hardy. What, my lord?

Nelson. The bird . . .

Hardy (listening; then). Yes, I hear it . . . a twittering.

Nelson. It is most curious. More than once before an action a small bird has flown into my cabin. It happened at the Nile. I wonder if it is coming again? . . .

[He climbs on to the seat in front of the window and puts out his head.]

There it is, Hardy.

[Nelson imitates a bird's call, whistling with his mouth. After a moment or two he climbs down.]

I used to whistle like that when I was a boy. Queer

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about that bird, Hardy. It's as though a sign were vouchsafed to me. We will leave the window open. It may come in. (*Pause.*) They liked my plan, eh?

Hardy. Even Collingwood hasn't a word of criticism.

Nelson. I have given Calder what he wanted—his ship and three officers. I wouldn't have done it a few years ago—when I hanged that smooth-tongued traitor, Admiral Caracciolo,¹ to the yard-arm at Naples. Am I growing soft?

Hardy. Villeneuve won't subscribe to that view, I imagine, in a day or two's time?

Nelson. By heaven, Hardy, we'll have a "Gazette"² all to ourselves.

[*Nelson goes to a drawer and takes out a case of glass eyes.*

We shall want our best eye, eh, Hardy?

[*He chooses one and turns it about as though it were a jewel, his head cocked on one side. He raises the glass eye near his own as if to compare them. His gaiety leaves him.*

So—everything is in readiness, Hardy.

Hardy. Everything, sir. If only the weather will hold.

Nelson. Yes. (*Pause.*) Bring Blackwood in—this codicil.

Hardy. Yes, sir.

[*Exit Hardy. Nelson takes up the codicil and glances at it again.*

[*Enter Hardy with Blackwood.*

¹ He had commanded the navy of the revolutionaries in Naples in 1799. On his capture he was court-martialled at Nelson's order. After a trial in which he was not given a fair chance to defend himself he was found guilty. He asked to be shot, but Nelson insisted on hanging, no doubt partly to please Lady Hamilton, whose friendship with the royal family of Naples made her particularly violent against revolutionaries. Nelson's conduct in this matter did him no credit.

² An official list of appointments, promotions, and honours.

BEFORE TRAFALGAR

Nelson. Come in, Blackwood. I would like you and Hardy to witness this—a codicil to my will.

Blackwood. Certainly—my lord.

Nelson. You ought to know perhaps that it is a codicil leaving Lady Hamilton and my daughter Horatia as a legacy to England.

[*Hardy and Blackwood incline their heads in acknowledgment.*

You know, as others do not—and do not wish to know—what a debt the country owes to Lady Hamilton for what she did in Naples and in victualling our ships for the Nile.¹ Without her, the Nile victory would have been impossible.

[*Hardy and Blackwood again incline their heads in agreement. Nelson dips the pen in the ink and hands it to Hardy.*

Hardy. I pray the legacy may never become operative, my lord. [*He signs.*

Nelson. We are in God's hands, Hardy.

[*Nelson takes the pen from Hardy and hands it to Blackwood.*

Blackwood. I hope you have no premonition, my lord. [*He signs.*

Nelson (smiling). He who plays at bowls must expect rubs.

Blackwood (having signed). That all—sir?

Nelson. Yes. I shall see you again before you return to the *Euryalus*.

Blackwood. Yes, my lord. [*Exit Blackwood.*

Nelson. You had better get what rest you can to-night.

Hardy. And you, my lord? I hope you will go to bed.

Nelson. Buonaparte needs only four hours' sleep, they say? I can make do with two. I have some

¹ She used her great influence at Naples to obtain victuals for the British fleet before the battle of the Nile.

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more writing to do. Let Collingwood and the others return to their ships.

Hardy. Yes, my lord. I shall be on deck if you want me, sir.

Nelson. Remember what I said about rest.

Hardy. Yes, sir.

[*Exit Hardy.*]

[*Nelson walks to the portrait of Lady Hamilton and stands looking at it. He returns and sits at his table again. He writes. There is subdued laughter from the Captains next door. He listens. He resumes writing and now pauses, lifts the sheet of paper and reads in a low voice.*]

Nelson. "May the great God whom I worship grant to my country for the benefit of Europe in general a great and glorious victory. And may no misconduct tarnish it, and may humanity after victory be a predominant feature in the British Fleet. For myself I commit my life to Him who made me, and may his blessing light on my endeavours for serving my country faithfully. To Him I resign myself and the just cause that is entrusted me to defend."

[*He leans his forehead on his hand and murmurs.*]

Amen. Amen.

The CURTAIN falls.

FOR FURTHER READING

Freemantle, *Trafalgar, 1805.*

Thomas Hardy, "Trafalgar," from "The Dynasts," in *Short Modern Plays* (Macmillan).

Southey, *Life of Nelson.*

QUESTIONS

1. Would this play interest a man who had never heard of Nelson? Would it be less interesting to a Frenchman?

BEFORE TRAFALGAR

2. "An arrow like myself now and then, and an oak like you." Explain Nelson's descriptions of himself and Hardy.
3. Nelson ridicules the idea of iron ships. How much later were they adopted in the navy?
4. "I hope you have no premonition, my lord." What evidence can you find that he had?
5. Why was the command of the sea particularly important to England at this period?

For Written Work

6. Illustrate from the play the qualities which make Nelson a leader.
7. Give instances of "considered rashness" in Nelson's career.
8. "Widespread destruction must be counted higher than a brilliant tactical victory." Does naval History bear out Nelson's assertion? Does it apply to land warfare?
9. "There are times when strict duty is not enough—when the right course must be taken at risk of one's career." Illustrate and discuss.
10. Which of Nelson's problems would not exist in a sea-battle to-day?

THE SIX O'CLOCK CALL

By LAURENCE HOUSMAN

CHARACTERS

A Footman.

Lord Conyngham.

The Archbishop of Canterbury.

Maid-servant.

The Duchess of Kent.

Queen Victoria.

THE SIX O'CLOCK CALL

1837

[The History books tell us about Queen Victoria from the point of view of the public : Mr. Housman's plays allow us glimpses of her from inside the Palace. He is interested in the woman, her family, and her immediate associates. Here he presents an important event in the History of England, the Queen's accession, with emphasis on its repercussions in her family. Until the death of William IV the young princess had been entirely ruled by her mother, the Duchess of Kent, who had been a widow since 1820. According to one biographer, "morning and evening, day and night, there was no relaxation of the maternal vigilance. The child grew into a girl, the girl into the young woman, but still she slept in her mother's bedroom. Still she had no place allotted her where she might sit or work by herself. An extraordinary watchfulness surrounded her every step ; up to the day of her accession, she never went downstairs without someone beside her holding her hand." This dominance was now broken and Victoria became her own mistress.

The play gives an impression of the low standard to which Royalty had sunk, but it is necessary to read on in History (or in Mr. Housman's plays) to realise how great a revival of the reputation of the throne began with that six o'clock call.

The actual dialogue is naturally imaginary, but the details of the incident are to be had from Victoria's own letters and journals and from the private papers of people eminent at court or in politics. The diary of the Queen records the early call as follows :—

"I was awoke at six-o'clock by Mamma, who told me that the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Conyngham were here and wished to see me. I got out of bed and went into my sitting-room (only in my dressing-gown), and *alone*,

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

and saw them. Lord Conyngham (the Lord Chamberlain) then acquainted me that my poor uncle, the King, was no more, and had expired at 12 minutes p. 2 this morning, and consequently that I am *Queen*. . . . Since it has pleased Providence to place me in this station, I shall do my utmost to fulfil my duty towards my country ; I am very young and perhaps in many, though not in all things, inexperienced, but I am sure that very few have more real good will and more real desire to do what is fit and right than I have.”]

It is still dark ; for in the entrance hall of Kensington Palace the shutters have not yet been unclosed. Behind a wide archway at C. burns a dim light : there is the staircase lobby. To the L. of the archway one sees the foot of the stairs.

In the dark emptiness goes the clanging of a bell, followed by knocks. A Footman, not quite dressed as he should be, enters carrying a light. He crosses from L. to R., and passes out of view. You hear unchaining and unbolting of a door ; then, indistinctly, voices, which grow louder as the visitors enter and become visible. Heavily cloaked, Lord Conyngham comes in, followed by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Conyngham. Tell them to take the message at once ! Say the matter is urgent.

Footman. Yes, my lord. But Her Royal Highness isn't up yet, my lord.

Conyngham. “ Up ? ” Of course she's not up at this hour ! Send Her Royal Highness's maid to call her.

[The Footman, having the only candle, is busy now lighting others. But the urgency of his lordship stops the business half-way ; and only one set of candles gets lighted before he goes.]

Footman. Yes, my lord.

Conyngham. And say His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Lord Conyngham are here to see Her Royal Highness on important business.

Footman. Yes, my lord.

THE SIX O'CLOCK CALL

Conyngham. Hurry, man ! Hurry !

Footman. Yes, my lord ; but I'll have to call the maid first.

Conyngham. Well, call her !

Footman. Yes, my lord ; but the maids sleep where I'm not supposed to go ; and the door up to it is locked. I shall have to throw up at the window.

Conyngham. Isn't there a bell ?

Footman. Yes, my lord ; in Her Royal Highness the Duchess's ¹ room there is a bell.

Conyngham. Well go and ask that it may be rung !

Footman (*aghast*). I daren't go to Her Royal Highness the Duchess's room, my lord : not now. Her Royal Highness the Princess is there too.

Conyngham. Well, go and do the best you can. But say Her Royal Highness *must* come—

Footman. Yes, my lord. [*Exit Footman.*

Conyngham (*finishing his sentence*)—at once ! . . . Good Lord ! What a house ! Sleeps with the old Cat, does she ?

Archbishop (*corrective, but suave*). I beg your pardon ?

Conyngham. I—I beg yours ! Yes ; I suppose one oughtn't to say that now. But your Grace knows that the Duchess has been a difficulty all along.

Archbishop. The Duchess is a determined character.

Conyngham. Yes.

Archbishop. It has had its advantages.

Conyngham. They have escaped my observation, I'm afraid.

Archbishop. The Princess has not seen a great deal of her uncles.² Her education has been—safeguarded.

Conyngham (*extenuatingly*). Well, of course, I know—I know—I know.

¹ Duchess of Kent, Victoria's mother.

² William IV and the Dukes of Sussex, Cumberland, and Cambridge.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Archbishop (*less extenuatingly*). Yes, my lord, we *know*.

Conyngham. Had we not better sit down? We may have to wait. If that man's stone-throwing is not good—we may have to wait a long time. . . . So this is how History gets written!

Archbishop. This won't get into History, my lord.

Conyngham. No . . . Your Grace?—may I? . . .
[*He offers a flask-cup, after filling it.*]

Archbishop. Ah, no. I thank you.

Conyngham. It's a chilly hour to be up. I never go about, late at night, or early—without *something*.

[*Drinks.*]

Archbishop. For you, my lord, very wise, I've no doubt. But I never go out at night, you see; at least, not late.

Conyngham. Ah! I often wish I didn't, when the night is over.

Archbishop. That is—understandable.

Conyngham (*missing the note of sympathy*). It's only human nature, your Grace.

Archbishop. Yes, I suppose so. I don't know . . . My office . . . There is a good deal of human nature that I have to avoid.

Conyngham. Rather difficult to avoid at the Court of the Regency,¹ wasn't it?

Archbishop. Oh, of course, sometimes I had to—well—look the other way. Still, I attended so seldom; only when called on officially.

Conyngham. Your Grace has officiated on a similar painful though auspicious occasion, I believe?

Archbishop. Yes. Yes. I announced his accession to His late Majesty King William. But he was only in the next room waiting.

¹ Before his accession in 1820, George IV had acted as Regent for nine years, because his father, George III, had become insane. George IV died in 1830 and was succeeded by his brother, William IV.

THE SIX O'CLOCK CALL

Conyngham. Ah ! How did he take it ?

Archbishop. With alacrity. . . . " Bless my soul ! you don't say so ! " were his first words. And then—" Well, well, though I'm less of a figure-head, I shall make a better King than poor George."

Conyngham. But he didn't, you know.

Archbishop. No ; a better character, but not a better King. That sometimes happens, I'm afraid.

Conyngham. Yes, kings often manage to do quite well without morals. Brain is more important.

Archbishop. Not too much of that either, I should have thought. Don't those with brain give much more trouble to their ministers ?

Conyngham. Oh, they manage to do that without any ! His late Majesty was a conspicuous example of it. You wouldn't believe—no, you wouldn't believe the trouble we sometimes had with him. They say you can make a donkey go by tying a carrot in front of its nose. Well, he was like a donkey with a carrot tied to its tail.

Archbishop. Really ?

Conyngham. Just like that. Over the Reform Bill,¹ you know, we almost had a Revolution—almost. Not his fault that we didn't.

Archbishop (discreetly). Was he just a little—like his father, you know ?

Conyngham. Mad, eh ? No, not mad. It was the shape of his head, I think. It was pear-shaped, you know—just like a pear. " The weakest fruit drops earliest to the ground,"² says Shakespeare. Well, his head was weak fruit distinctly—amazing how it *hung on* : one can't exactly say " lasted."

[*The Footman re-enters.*

Well ? What have you done ?

¹ In the great struggle of the Whigs for the Reform Bill, William IV identified himself with the Bill's opponents, the Tories.

² Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*, IV. I. 115.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Footman. I've called the maid, my lord. Would your Lordship like more light?

Conyngham. Oh yes; a little more light would, I suppose, be better. (*Then to the Archbishop*) For so auspicious an occasion.

Footman. The windows, my lord?

Conyngham. No, no, not the windows, I think. *The blinds—the blinds* must stay down at any rate.

[*The Footman lights more candles.*]

Archbishop (confidentially). Very sad, very sad, you know! Good old King George—such a large family—so many sons, and not one of them what he should be.

[*Exit Footman.*]

Conyngham (grimly). And she—the daughter of one of them.

Archbishop. Ah, but women are different—so different, you know. Let's hope! Let's hope!

Conyngham. Well, we must get her married, and then—married to the right man—the difference won't so much matter—her cousin, Prince George of Cambridge,¹ would be very suitable—same age, and can talk English now, so I'm told, like a native.

Archbishop. Over that you will have difficulty with the Duchess.

Conyngham. Oh, yes; the Duchess is going to be difficult whatever's proposed. She will regard this as her own succession almost.

Archbishop (wisely). It almost will be.

Conyngham. That is what we must *prevent*.

Archbishop. The Duchess has privately planned a marriage more to her own liking, I'm told.

Conyngham. Eh? Who?

Archbishop. She has two nephews—through her

¹ 1819–1904. Son of the first Duke of Cambridge, who was George III's seventh son. He was born in Hanover, where his father was Viceroy.

THE SIX O'CLOCK CALL

brother the Duke of Saxe-Coburg—Prince Ernest, and Prince Albert.¹

Conyngham. But that won't do ! Tainted blood ! Tainted blood !

Archbishop. Indeed !

Conyngham (*disgustedly*). Ye-es : bleeding skins—haemophilia.² It's in the family. Cousins. No ; it won't *do*.

Archbishop. But Prince George is her cousin, also.

Conyngham. Ah, but it's not on that side. It's on the mother's—the Coburgs. And, you know, it comes through the women. The males have it : the women don't ; but they pass it on. Do you know her brother, the Duke, once nearly bled to death ?

Archbishop. Dear me ! Is that so ?

Conyngham. Marrying her daughter to *his* son would be fatal ! You know, it's all very well, in one way, Royalty to make itself a class all by itself. But it's a German notion : 't isn't English. And when it leads to so much inbreeding, it gets dangerous. English kings have married commoners in the past ; they'd better do it again—or into the peerage. Do you know—if the Duke of Wellington³ had been—well, twenty years younger, I'd have married her to him.

Archbishop. You don't mean it !

Conyngham. I do. 'Twould have been very popular ; and a foreign marriage won't be. (*He looks at his watch.*) Tut, tut ! That girl's a very long time coming !

Archbishop (*correctively*). The Queen ?

¹ Victoria had already met them and been charmed by Prince Albert, whom she later married.

² A congenital disease in which uncontrollable bleeding results from a slight wound.

³ He was 68 years old !

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Conyngham (*plausibly covering his mistake*). No, no ; I mean the maid. I'm wondering whether she has called her. . . . It's a pity you know, a pity ! I don't know what to think of it !

Archbishop. " It " meaning what ?

Conyngham. A female on the throne ; a King would have been so much better.

Archbishop. I don't know, my lord. Heirs male of the last generation have not been a conspicuous success.

Conyngham. No English King has been a conspicuous success since Edward I.

Archbishop. Yet the monarchy has—gone on.

[*Enter Maid-servant.*

Conyngham. Yes ; but it's gone off.

Maid. I beg your pardon, my lord.

Conyngham. Yes ? Well ?

Maid. Her Royal Highness, my lord. I went in, but Her Royal Highness was asleep.

Conyngham. Well, you must wake Her Royal Highness up, then.

Maid. Such a beautiful sleep, my lord : I didn't like to.

Conyngham. Even the most beautiful sleep must give way to affairs of State. You know who I am ?

Maid. Yes, my lord.

Conyngham. You know His Grace ?

Maid. Yes, my lord.

Conyngham. Then go at once : wake Her Royal Highness, and tell her that we are here, waiting—for an audience.

[*Awestruck and submissive, the Maid goes. A clock strikes.*

Six o'clock. There is to be a Council at ten.

Archbishop. Where ? Here ?

Conyngham. At St. James's, I imagine. No, perhaps it will have to be here. She mustn't appear

THE SIX O'CLOCK CALL

in public yet. 'Twouldn't be quite decent. People might cheer.

[Enter the Duchess of Kent : she is robed rather than dressed ; but her heavy négligée has a certain dignity about it. She enters, a conscious " Presence." They rise and bow.]

Duchess. Your Grace, my Lord Conyngham, you have news for us ?

Conyngham. For Her Royal Highness the Princess, we have news, Madam.

Duchess. Ah ! The King then—— ?

Conyngham. Is dead.

Duchess. Then my daughter is now—— ?

Conyngham. Queen.

Duchess. It has come, then—at last ! And I—I am the Queen Mother !

Conyngham. No, Madam ; your Royal Highness is not the Queen Mother.

Duchess (affronted). Not ?

Conyngham. Your Royal Highness is the Queen's Mother ; that is the distinction. Only had your Royal Highness been Queen in the first place, would that other title now follow.

Duchess. Then, if it is not mine by your laws, she shall give it me.

Conyngham. That, Madam, I fear, will be impossible.

Duchess. Ah ! I will go myself and speak to her at once. That shall settle it !

Conyngham. Madam, we are here to see Her Majesty the Queen on urgent business ; and we must not be delayed. Your presence at the interview, Madam, will not be required, unless Her Majesty sends for you.

Duchess. Ah ! This is not to be borne !

Archbishop (conciliatory). Madam, this is a very historic occasion. We are here officially only.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

Etiquette and immemorial tradition prescribe certain rules which have to be observed. Your Royal Highness would not wish to break them.

Conyngham (at centre). Your Grace, she's coming !

Archbishop. Then, Madam, for a moment—for a moment only !

[He opens a side-door and bows the Duchess through it. She goes, compelled, but reluctant. The shadow of Queen Victoria is projected upon the wall of the lobby as she descends. She enters : the Archbishop and the Lord Chamberlain kneel and kiss her hand. The side-door opens again ; the Duchess thrusts in her head ; she watches spell-bound.]

Conyngham. Your Majesty, it is our painful duty to announce to your Majesty—

Duchess (not waiting for the sentence to finish). Ah ! my daughter, she is Queen—Queen !

[The curtain slowly descends ; after a few seconds it rises again. Victoria stands alone at the foot of the stairs. Away to the right, ceremoniously backing from the Presence, the Archbishop and the Lord Chamberlain make their last bow and go. Into this solemn scene no Footman intrudes ; they let themselves out. At the sound of the shutting door, the side-door opens fully : the Duchess enters, and advances rapturously to claim her daughter's homage.]

Victoria (still a little mazed at the wonder of it all). Mama !

Duchess (embracing her). My child ! My child ! Oh, my child !

Victoria. They came to tell me that I am Queen.

Duchess. Yes : you are Queen at last !

Victoria. But really Queen—now : before I have been crowned ?

THE SIX O'CLOCK CALL

Duchess. Yes : now, at once ! The King is dead : you are Queen !

Victoria. Then my reign has already begun ? I can do—as I like ?

Duchess. Yes ; as you like ! Do not mind what anyone says. If you want to do it—do it !

Victoria. Oh ! . . . Then . . . Mama. There is something I would like.

Duchess. Ah, yes ! Say it ! It shall be done.

Victoria. How strange that it should have all come—so suddenly !

Duchess. Yes, so suddenly—after we have waited so long. But now, my love—do not stay here to catch cold. Come back to your own Mother's bed !

Victoria. No, Mama dear. As I may now do as I like, I wish in future to have a bed, and a room of my own !

Duchess (stupent). Of your own ?

Victoria. Yes—please, Mama.

Duchess. Oh ! so you have been waiting—for *that* !

Victoria. I should be glad, if you don't mind—now that I am my own mistress. Yes, I would rather be alone.

[*She does not wait to hear more.*]

Duchess. Mind ! . . . Glad ! . . . Alone ! . . . O God ! What is going to become of me ?

[*She stands and watches, while Victoria, mistress henceforth of her own destiny, turns and goes quietly upstairs again, having imposed, even now, her wish to be alone for a while.*]

FOR FURTHER READING

Laurence Housman, *Victoria Regina* (short plays).

Lytton Strachey, *Queen Victoria*.

Ed. Viscount Esher, *The Girlhood of Queen Victoria* (a selection from her diaries, 1832-1840).

Library Sri Pratap College,
Srinagar.

SHORT HISTORICAL PLAYS

QUESTIONS

1. Draw a genealogical table to illustrate Queen Victoria's claim to the throne.
2. "English Kings have married commoners in the past." Give all the examples you can.
3. Find instances of humour in the play. Describe in each case the type of humour.
4. Mention five great events in English History which fall within the reign of Victoria.

For Written Work

5. "No English King has been a conspicuous success since Edward I." Is this too sweeping a statement?
6. How would you describe the atmosphere of the play? By what means is it created?
7. Does Victoria's later history suggest that she inherited any of her mother's characteristics?
8. Write a short scene to fill in the gap in the play after Victoria's entrance. Why do you think the author did not fill it in himself?
9. "Victoria the Great." Justify this estimate.
10. Would you describe this play as dramatic?

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